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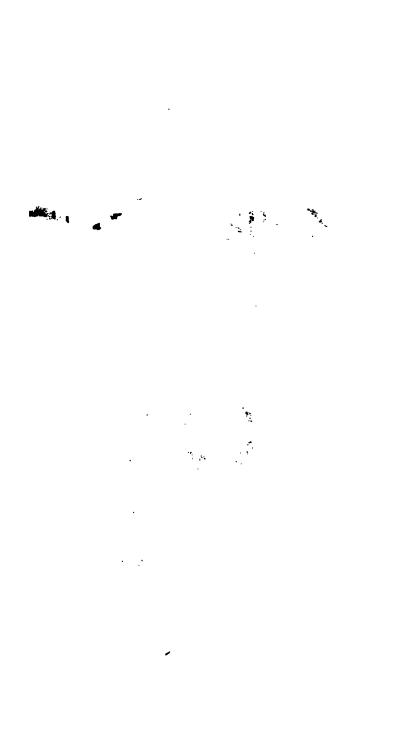
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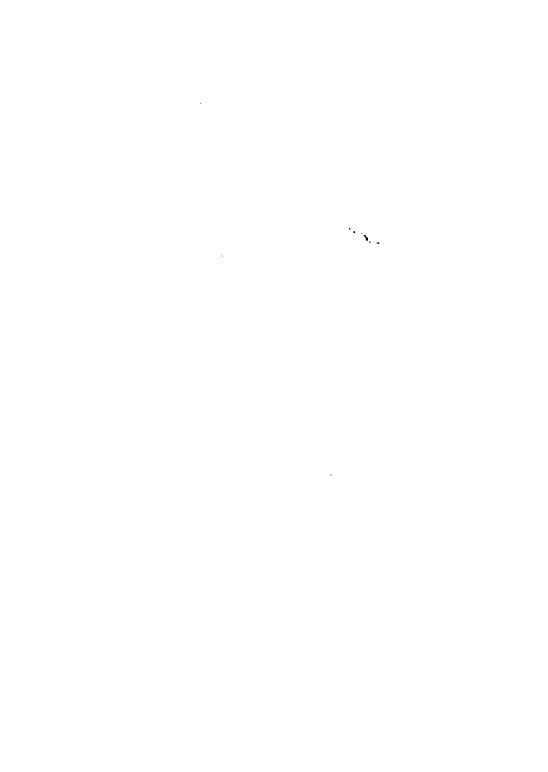
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"Myra—Mr. Broakley—Mr. Broakley, my daughter Myra"





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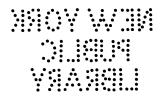
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY BROTHER EDWARD



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WINDING UP

IT SEEMS odd, doesn't it, to you, dear reader, to begin reading a book starting with the winding up? But, then, you must remember that I am the family clock, and that did I not begin with the winding up, there would be no tale told.

Yes, I am the old family clock. I recall very well the first time I was set up in the wide hallway of the old family homestead of the Boosch family—Dr. Henry Boosch of the original pioneers of that name who settled in Monroe County, Pennsylvania, in the early fifties. My, how they all stood around me and watched my hands move and my pendulum swing away the fleeting moments! What an innovation I was in the old homestead that had known naught but the sundial and the marks on the porch uprights to indicate the hours of the day when the sun shone. And when the days were dark and gloomy, what cared any one for these old, time-honored methods of telling time, when they could look at my new,

A Knight in Homespun

shining face, with the hours and minutes marked

off by figures made of gold.

My! My! but that was long ago! And what changes I have seen since then! What joy and sadness, recurring with each birth and death within the domain of that sanctified hall, have I seen! How the memories arise of the joyous faces that gazed upon me on the announcement of a new arrival in the household of the Boosches; and, again, how well I remember the subdued tones and the half-audible sobs when I was looked upon for the hour of the departure of the cold, immortal clay that was never again to look upon my face.

And the weddings that I have seen! Mary and John, Jennie and Joseph, Kate and William, Laura and the good, kind, old doctor, whose every thought was for the unfortunate and who forgot his own world-troubles in the desire to alleviate the sufferings of the unfortunate pioneers of those days when the tilling of the soil and the hewing of the forests were accomplished only

by dint of the hardest work.

And, my! How I have followed the fortunes of the Boosch family from the time I was installed in the hallway up to the time I was relegated to the spare room in the attic of the new domicile in the town of East Stroudsburg, where my poor

old, worn-out body was replaced by a more modern, up-to-date clock, which did not repose in the hall-way as I did of yore, but was awarded the place of honor on the parlor mantel. Ah, well! I am still able to tick off the moments, up here in the attic, with the spirits of those who have gone before, and now, before I am taken away, to God only knows where, I shall tick off the story of one of the best men that ever trod the roads and crossroads of this country—plain Jim Carbon, we used to call him, but now Mister James Carbon, if you please. And so, being only a plain, old-fashioned family clock, I shall tick off my story in my own plain, old-fashioned way.

TICK THE FIRST

How well I remember the day when Jim Carbon came to the old homestead of the Boosches, looking for work. Plain, scrawny, with big knobs of knuckles, he was the personification of what you would call a hard-working boy—or man, rather, for he had just passed the age of twenty-one. And what a pleasant face he had. With his bundle on his back, suspended from a stick slung across his shoulder, he timidly knocked at the door and inquired if the man of the house was in. Mary, the girl of all work, answered the summons, and, surveying Jim with a critical eye, although tramps were unknown hereabouts in those days, concluded that he might step into the hallway but no further.

"Doctor," she called up the stairway, "here is some person wants to see the man of the house."

Slowly and with the tread of a man who was approaching the sere of life, the doctor came down the stairs, his clean-shaven face benignant and radiant.

"Well, young man," he said in his usual kindly way—he never was any different to any one,



"My name is James Carbon. I am looking for work on a farm"

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whether poor or rich, honest or dishonest— "what can I do for you?"

The young man, timidly turning his hat around several times, looked the good doctor in the face with those big brown eyes I learned to know so well, and in a voice that was a little tremulous for a man, said:

"My name is James Carbon. I am looking for work on a farm. I have been brought up to

it—never knew anything else."

Here he apologetically exhibited his big hardened hands to the doctor, who asked him:

"And where do you come from, pray, and why are you wandering around at this time of

year?"

"My story is a short one," said Carbon. "I was born in the little town of Egg Harbor, in the state of New Jersey, and had lived there ever since. But the home which I had known all my life was broken up when my father and mother were both taken ill and died from pneumonia. They had worked hard for many years and had almost cleared the farm of the mortgage. After the funeral—they had both been buried on the same day—I left the old home, never wishing to see it again. Aye, I could not even bear to remain in the same town. I told a lawyer to sell the place, put the money in bank to my credit, packed up

a few things, and have wandered about ever since, looking for a new home. I have no recommendation, never having worked for any one but my father, and that seems to be against me. If you want to, sir, you can write to my lawyer. He has known me from babyhood. His name is—"

"Never mind his name," said the doctor; "writing does not make a man's character. I think I am a pretty good judge of human nature, and your face is the only recommendation I want. I have need for a strong young fellow like you, and if you want hard work for little money you can make yourself at home here as long as you want to."

"I am not afraid of work, sir," said Jim. "I have been used to that since I was eleven years

of age."

"Very well, then, young man, you can take your 'duds' upstairs, and when you are ready you can sit down and have a good meal. I like your face, and I am sure we will get along very well together."

"I thank you, sir," said Jim, with a sign of a tear in his eye. "I shall try to be worthy of your confidence in me. You shall never regret your kind words to me—the first I have had since

my parents' death."

"Mary," called the doctor, "show this young man the spare room in the attic, and when he comes down see that he gets a good, warm meal as soon as you can get it ready."

And that is how Jim Carbon was installed in the homestead of the Boosch family and became identified with the characters in the story I am

now ticking off.

Mary ushered Jim up to a neat, cozy room in the attic—not a storeroom, by any means, let me tell you, but a tastily arranged room—such a one as many a man in the crowded cities would envy. The old-fashioned iron bedstead looked as clean and comfortable as a tired man could wish, the little homely washstand was immaculately white, and on the walls hung pictures—chromos, it is true, but of such human interest subjects that they appealed to the eye which knew not the value of pictures as measured by dollars and cents.

"This is a pretty comfortable room, Mr.—er?"

remarked Mary.

"Carbon," said Jim. "James Carbon is my name."

And he bowed with a grace becoming a chevalier.

"I hope you will like your home here, Mr. Carbon," continued Mary, returning with a curtsey the bow. "You will find the doctor a very good, kind, Christian man, and Mrs.

Boosch you will find to be as good, kind, and Christian a woman. Miss Boosch is one of the sweetest young ladies I have ever met in my life—one cannot help but love her, and I envy Mr. Broakley the prize he will soon win."

"You make me feel quite interested, Miss—"
"Mary Lash is my name, Mr. Carbon."

"You make me feel quite interested in the family, Miss Lash. I hope we shall be good friends."

He extended his hard, knobby hand, which was taken with dainty grace by Mary, who said in a voice that was not lacking in sweetness:

"I am sure that we shall be. There is something about the environment of this house that seems to make all well disposed toward one another. If you will be down in ten minutes, Mr. Carbon, you will find a good meal ready for you in the kitchen."

"I thank you ever so much," said Jim, with a tremulous voice; "it seems so good to me to hear a voice of welcome after my weary wandering, and I shall certainly do what I can to repay those who have given me this welcome."

When Mary left the room Jim sat down on the plain wooden chair for a moment, and with his head between his hands offered up a prayer to the Almighty that He might bless his days

and the days of all in the homestead in which he hoped to make his home for many years to come. He was a Christian, God-fearing man, and never failed to speak with his Maker in the

crucial periods of his life.

When he had "fixed himself up a bit" he descended the stairs to the kitchen. And what a kitchen that was! Why should a man-no matter what station in life he occupied—ever want to eat in any other place than in such a kitchen? How everything shone and glinted in the rays of the setting sun as they gleamed through the windows-not one or two-but three of them-which fronted the western portion of the room. And there were more windows, too, on the other sides of the room. And each seemed to give a kaleidoscopic view of well-tilled fields, variegated by the various crops now in the fullness of harvest, well-kept fences and model outhouses, with the neighboring farmhouses silhouetted against the rays of the setting sun. What a picture it was —one that emblazoned itself in the memory of Jim many, many times in the years that fate had decreed he should spend away from that scene.

And when he had finished his meal Mary told him that the doctor wished to see him and make him acquainted with the family. He was ushered into the "back parlor," and there he was intro-

duced to Mrs. Boosch. What a resemblance there was to his sainted mother—so much so that he should have loved to imprint a kiss upon her lips and call in the old-time way, "Mother!" A tear stole down his cheek as he said, in response to the introduction:

"Mrs. Boosch, I feel honored in being permitted to be one of your household, no matter in what humble capacity."

And then he was introduced to Arthur Boosch, the young gentleman of the family, who shook hands with him as heartily as if he were a longlost brother.

"And now, Mr. Carbon—or Jim, as I will have to call you hereafter, I suppose—I want to introduce you to the last, but not least, of my family, Miss Myra. Myra, this is James Carbon, who is going to join our household for, let us hope, many years to come."

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Carbon. I wish you many years of happiness in your new

home."

Jim looked up and saw as lovely a vision of feminine beauty and grace of figure as any artist could hope to behold in his most inspired moments.

What a lovable face, what queenly grace as she extended her dimpled little hand—not in a cold, formal way, but with a "womanly manly,"

A Knight in Homespun

if I may be permitted to use the expression, grasp that meant earnestness, sincerity, and

honesty of greeting.

"Miss Boosch," he said, his face becoming almost scarlet as the warmth of each response to the introduction sent the blood coursing through his veins, "I thank you; I thank you all. I have known a happy home like this, and I assure you that my prayers each night will be that God will bless this household and reward you all for the kind words you have said to one who has been a wanderer because he could not bear—"

Here Jim broke down completely, and sobbing

like a child, unceremoniously left the room.

"Mother," said Dr. Boosch to his wife, who was surreptitiously engaged in wiping the furrows under her eyes, "I think that young man is a good young man."

What a voluminous expression was conveyed in those few words, coming from such a man as

Dr. Boosch!

TICK THE SECOND

I HAVE transgressed in speaking of the beauty and grace of Myra Boosch. But I could not resist. The memory, as I am ticking off this tale, of her sweet face gazing upon me as she looked for the appointed hour when he—HE, mind you, for in a girl's life there is only one HE—was to come, was too inspiriting to resist. But I will have to begin at the very beginning to describe the early days of one so good, so true, so trusting, that her future life hung as on a thread owing to that very trusting good heart of hers.

One beautiful spring morning, as I was droning, as you might say, the early hours away, the good doctor came into the hallway and looked up at my face, saying, in a confidential sort of a way—mind you, to me!—"Clock, tell me, will it be a boy or a girl? You know, dear old clock, that what I wish, above all, is a daughter to grace my household—one who might have her mother's beautiful face, her mother's lovable heart, one who could personify in her offspring a reflection of her whom I have loved all these years, and who, in all my trials and tribulations, has been the one

upon whom I have leaned most heavily. Tell me, good clock," he further philosophized, "tell me, I beseech you, are my prayers to be heard?"

And what could I say, do you imagine, being only a family clock, set out in the hallway ostensibly to indicate the time of day—and night, too, for that matter?

But, then, all things come out right in the end, and, sure enough, as the sun was going down in a golden blaze of glory, the good doctor, with beaming, smiling face, looked up at me and said:

"Well, Mr. Clock, you have had your wish" as if it had been my wish instead of his—"it

is a daughter."

And how radiant was his face as it beamed on me! What a wonder that he did not shake hands with me! Little did he think, then, of the troubled waters that her ship of life was to encounter. But why should he think of aught, now, but of the blessing bestowed upon him—of his wish gratified? A daughter! How often he repeated, in his melodious voice, to me, "Well, Mr. Clock, we have in this house, now, a daughter. Miss Boosch! How does that sound to you—eh, Mr. Clock?"

And then he chuckled to himself and paced up and down the hallway a dozen times, as if unable to still the emotions that were welling up

in his heart. And how many times he went into the room where mother and child were, and finally brought the infant in his arms to introduce her to me. I verily believe that he loved me as one of the family. He held up before me the prettiest, chubbiest, cutest mite of a baby that it was ever the pleasure of a human being—much less of a poor, old-fashioned family clock like me—to behold. I could almost imagine—how foolish of me, don't you think?—that the precious burden he was holding in his arms was counting the minutes I was ticking off. It was a silly notion of mine, I am sure, but I really believed it at the time.

How I watched that baby grow! My, how the time slipped by! It seems almost incredible to me that in so short a time she could have grown from the tiny baby she was into a girl "crawling unwilling to school." How well I remember her, as with "shining morning face" she looked up at me, with her schoolbag thrown over her shoulders, her hands encased in the mittens that her mother had knitted, as if such things could not be bought at the store just as good as those she made.

And then, year by year, I watched her blossom into that period of life when a girl thinks she no longer is a girl, but wants every one to know that she has passed to womanhood and is not to be

addressed by her given name unless it is prefixed by "Miss."

Can I ever forget the party that her father and mother gave her in honor of her eighteenth birthday? No, not if I am dismembered and sent away, piece by piece, shall I ever forget that merry party. What a vision of loveliness she was! And I was not the only one who thought so, I can tell you. There was many a young man envied me, you may believe, when she came out into the hall and placed her arms around me in that affectionate way of hers, and wished that he, too, could be the old family clock and feel those arms around him. I honestly believe that she loved me from the day that her father brought her from the maternal room and introduced me to her. And when she came near me, it is a wonder that I did not tick faster and run far ahead of time, for I, too, loved her as only an old family clock can learn to love those whom destiny has decreed should cross the threshold of the home where it is placed.

Did it ever occur to you, dear reader, reading the ticking off of this tale, what a symphony of griefs and sorrows, of joys and pleasures, passes before an old family clock? Have you ever looked upon the clock on your mantel shelf and

soliloquized:

A Knight in Homespun

"Well, old clock, we have seen days of happiness and care together, haven't we?"

Only to have the clock repeat the refrain, "We have, haven't we?" We have, haven't we?"

In the stillness of night, when all is quiet about the house, when your thoughts are engrossed in the past, listen for a few minutes to the clock and see if the refrain is not "We have, haven't we?"—just as the threnody of the katydid is "Katy did, Katy didn't."

And haven't you thought, dear reader, how the old family clock has been a mute witness to your silly family quarrels, when you magnified them and thought that life was not worth the living, only to feel in the morning, after the dispassionate sleep and rest of the night, that you had been hasty, and that the imprinted kiss of forgiveness and beg-to-be-forgiven-ness was sweeter far than the betrothal kiss? Ah, yes! I cannot refrain from being a little bit egotistical and reminding you that the ticking of the clock is as the pulsating beats of the human heart. We have our stories of life and death, of sorrow and joy, just as your heartbeats are ticking away the seconds, minutes, and hours of your life, with its joys and sorrows.

But I am becoming selfish in my recital of my affinity to humanity, and will stop and lead on to:

TICK THE THIRD

On that memorable—to others, as well as to me—birthday party of Miss Myra Boosch there was one in the gay throng of guests ushered into the presence of the hosts, who had never before crossed the threshold of the homestead, and yet seemed to be well known to those present.

This person was Richard Broakley. I am able, in my homely way, to describe a lovely woman, but who can describe a handsome man—more than to say that he was handsome? Can you go into rhapsodies about his hair, his beautiful figure, his grace of movement, his silver-toned voice? I should say that I cannot. I can only give one description—that is, as I have said, that he was a handsome man, with an open, frank manner that would win its way into the heart of any girl far less susceptible than Miss Myra Boosch—now eighteen years of age, if you please, and no longer "little Myra."

It was one of those fatal moments in a girl's career, that moment when her father took hold of the young man's arm and, leading him over to his daughter, who was flushed with the excite-

ment of the numerous introductions and the

voices of flattery, presented him.

"My dear Myra, this is Mr. Richard Broakley, the son of our neighbors, who has just returned for a vacation from college. Myra, Mr. Broakley —Mr. Broakley, my daughter Myra."

She gave one look into the frank, open countenance of Richard Broakley, and the "God that disposes while man proposes" had done His work.

"Mr. Broakley," she said, warmly, extending her hand, "I am glad to meet you—particularly on this evening, which means so much to me. I am glad for the reason that you, being a collegiate man, can assist me in my researches in—"

"Let us not speak of scientific matters now, Miss Boosch," said Richard Broakley; "we shall have plenty of opportunity, I hope, in the future, to discuss those matters. Let us only remember that this day commemorates the blossoming into womanhood of the most lovely person it has ever been my fortune to—"

"Mr. Broakley!" ejaculated Myra, her face aflush, "you certainly have acquired in college

the gift of conveying orally unmerited—"

"My dear Miss Boosch, say not unmerited. To me, merit wins, and were it not for merit I would not for a moment think of awarding the merit medal to one who—"

"Mr. Broakley," interrupted Myra, blushing, "I think you are a flatterer, not a good critic."

"Well, so be it," laughingly answered Broakley. And then Myra was swallowed up in a labyrinth of couples—young and old—who had compelled

recognition.

Now, I must tick off a few words about Richard Broakley. I had known the Broakley family ever since I was installed in the Boosch homestead. The senior Broakleys were wont to drop in of an evening to have a chat, and perchance a game of that innocent amusement, dominoes.

Three years before Myra was born the household of the Broakleys had been blessed by the arrival of a boy—Richard, the first and only child of that

worthy pair.

Richard had grown up to be a handsome young man, with an aversion to farmwork. He was of a studious disposition, no one could gainsay that, and in early boyhood had taken to book reading and study as few young boys can be credited with doing. His father appreciated that, it is true, but regretted very much his aversion to any work connected with the farm—not that he was expected to do menial work, but he could not seem to reconcile himself even to the minor details of keeping account of the tons of hay in the barn, or the bushels of grain harvested, or the number

of chickens in the hennery, or in fact, anything having to do with the products of the farm.

He would sit for hours poring over a book on mineralogy, and would wander over the farm picking up a stone here and there which he thought would be a subject of mineralogical analysis.

In the little country school he proved to be an apt scholar, and it was not long before his father gave up the idea of interesting him in the work he himself had loved and performed so well, and after consulting with his wife—he consulted with her on all matters, whether relating to family or financial matters—he, or rather they, decided that the best thing that could be done would be to send Richard to college and let him work out his path in life, according to his own inclinations.

And so it was that Richard had gone to college, while his father still hoped that some day he would come home with the purpose of taking up the work that had made his father a prosperous man.

But at each recurring vacation period, upon his return home, Richard evinced the same aversion to all things connected with the farm.

"Mother," said Mr. Broakley one day upon the return for the summer of Richard, whom he had shown over the farm and who had evidenced no interest whatever in the progress and improvements that his father had tried to make clear to

him, "I cannot understand Richard. I took him all over the place and explained how we had improved this and that, how we were advancing in our methods of tilling and garnering, how we were adding to the acres that are cleared, but he seems to feel no interest whatever in the farm. How do you account for that?"

There was a tone of sadness in his voice which his wife was quick to detect. She, alone, knew of the dreams her husband had had of the heir who was to carry on the work when he no longer was able to do so. She, alone, knew how her husband had tried to reconcile himself to the thought that when that time arrived his lifework would have to be entrusted to strangers, but she knew, also, that it was grieving him deeply, although he had never given her any visible evidence of that.

"Samuel," said his wife, "God works out the destiny of us all. If it be His wish that our Richard should choose a path in life different from that we desire, we can do nothing but bow to His inscrutable will. You know, Samuel, that Richard is old enough to choose for himself now, and that you can bend the twig, but you cannot bend the tree."

"Well said, my sweetheart,"—he always called her sweetheart, and I know she always was to him

what she had been in her girlhood, his sweetheart—
"perhaps it is just as well. Maybe some day he
will make his mark in the scientific world, and
then we would feel that we had done wrong in
trying to persuade him to give up his own markingout of his pathway in life."

And so it came to pass that on the day that Richard Broakley had been introduced to Myra Boosch he had no established purpose—no direct aim, I might say—as to his future, except that his avowed hatred for farmwork became more manifest.

The summer days were spent by Richard in wandering over the mountains of Pennsylvania, mostly Pocono, in the pursuit of his daydreams of discovering the presence of some metal that would relieve him of all financial worry for the future. He had taken sufficient interest in mineralogy to become proficient as a prospector, and no argument could dissuade him from his notion that from the mountains of Pennsylvania would be taken silver—nay, even gold.

He had called upon Dr. Boosch frequently, and with each call there was a deeper desire to be in the presence of Myra. And I know, having seen the roses in her cheeks and the light in her eyes when she saw him, through the glass door leading to the porch, stepping up the gravel walk, that she, too, took pleasure in his presence.

How warmly she greeted him when she opened the door, and in response to his query, "Is your father in?"—said in a tone that plainly indicated to me that he wished for a negative reply—she

would say:

"No, Mr. Broakley, papa has just gone out for a drive with mamma. Won't you step in for a minute? I have a new butterfly which I wish you would look at and give me some information about. I am getting to be quite an entomologist, and with your help, Mr. Broakley, I hope to become quite famous for my collection of butterflies and bugs."

And then they would wander off about the fields and gather flowers and chase butterflies like children. How well I recall her happy, joyous face, set cunningly in the frame of the sunbonnet thrown carelessly over—not on—her head, hanging on her shoulders by the wide ribbon tied under

her dimpled chin!

Myra, Myra, in your innocence you knew no care then, did you? You only knew that the man you were learning to love was the man who stepped so happily by your side and gazed upon the picture you made, framed by your sunbonnet, with eyes that devotedly spoke of the love that was yours in return. You thought, then, didn't you, Myra, that only one true heart beat for you?

You did not know that another heart had been won by you, and that Jim Carbon, man of all work, had learned to worship the very ground you trod, and that, though he never approached you except in a manner becoming his position in the old homestead, he wondered why fate had destined that he should not have such happiness as was the lot of Richard Broakley.

How often he watched you, Myra, as you stepped lightly across the lawn, and said to himself: Jim Carbon, if you could only have had the good fortune to have been loved by such an angel, what a world of happiness this would be to you." You little knew then, Myra, as you gave me a look, passing through the hallway, as if reproaching me for having made the moments pass too swiftly when Richard called, that there was a love growing in the heart of one who never spoke of it to human being!

Ah, me! why could not the Fates work out matters so that faithful, loving hearts such as Jim Carbon's should enjoy the blessings of a love returned by one so good and pretty as Myra

Boosch?

But why should a family clock attempt to unravel the mysteries of life, when the greatest philosophers have failed to do so?

TICK THE FOURTH

Two years have passed since that memorable birthday party. Two years! It seems to me but yesterday, though I have ticked off many minutes, hours, and days since then. Two years! What an eternity that must be to a prisoner in his cell! What an eternity to the incurable waiting for time to end the sufferings that science has failed to alleviate! But to lovers, what are two years?

Last summer, when Richard Broakley returned for his second vacation, with the hope that he would be graduated the following year, what a roundelay of pleasure trips, of lovemaking, of happy moments spent in the shadows of what are now known as Marshall's Falls, thundering in a modest way, as compared with Niagara, a song of the forces of nature as shown in the wearing away of rocks by the never-ending, neverceasing rush of water over the precipice. How they sat beneath those falls, gazing for hours at what appeared to them the grandeur, the splendor, as the sun formed a rainbow from the rising spray.

You of modern days, who have traveled to Niagara in swift-moving cars, equipped with their wonderful modes of comfort, can little appreciate what grandeur there was to the lovers in Marshall's Falls, a pigmy compared with the "thunderer of waters."

And then the husking bees, the strawberry festivals on the vacant lot opposite the modest church, with its bevy of ruddy-cheeked girls importuning the young men to buy in order that they might hold the record for the largest sales; the straw-rides, with the sinking in of the straw, and the shrieks and shouts as they bumped over a "thank-you-ma'am"; the discordant singing that made the welkin ring and woke up the summer boarder who had been lured there by the seductive promises of "absolute quiet."

Care-free, indeed, were they—Myra and Richard. And when the time came for his return to college, how happy they seemed as he came to bid farewell for the short, "teeny" while, as she termed it, that he would be gone. How long and earnestly they lingered and talked while I ticked mutely on. What plans they laid for the next year, when he should come home for good! Without rhyme or reason they mapped out their future as only lovers can do, who have no idea of the practicabilities of life.

And then the return, Richard having been graduated with high honors; the feting in his honor by his parents; the constant whirligig of receptions by the neighbors, and then, late in the fall, the announcement of the death of his maiden aunt, Cynthia Broakley, who had acquired for some reason known only to herself an aversion to early marriages. She bequeathed to her nephew a substantial sum of money—sufficient to make him free from monetary cares for years to come, provided:—

"It is expressly stipulated that my nephew, in order to become a beneficiary under my will, shall not marry before the age of twenty-five."

"We can wait two years longer, can't we, Myra, dear?" said Richard, when he heard the

stipulation of the will.

"I suppose so," returned Myra, in a tone of voice that plainly indicated to me—but not to him—that she wished that the aunt had not died, but had left them to their own resources to struggle along in the world, with the confidence that her Richard would not see her want for anything. "But two years seem a long while, now that we are engaged, don't they, Richard?"

"Not if they pass as quickly as have the last two years, Myra," he answered, placing an arm around her waist and giving her an embrace

that restored, in a measure, her evident present lack of faith in the rapidity of movement of time.

And then they sat for hours talking of the cottage they would build—"nest" most lovers call it—but Richard was far too practical a man to think that a nest would do for his Myra. He knew full well that her parents had gratified her every wish, and had it not been for this unexpected legacy from his aunt he would surely not have thought of marriage until he had seen his way clear to providing a comfortable home for her, free from most of the cares of house-wifery.

And, in the meantime, Jim Carbon had gone about his work, endearing himself alike to the family of his employer and to the neighbors. Wherever there was death or misfortune in the homes of the neighbors, there was to be found Jim Carbon, after the work of the day had been finished, administering to their wants, driving long distances in order to get the doctor or to stay over night helping to do that part of the work about the farm which was neglected owing to the illness of the male portion of the afflicted family. Ever ready to extend a helping hand to those in pecuniary need, people often wondered where he got the money from, little thinking that he was drawing from the bank where the money accruing

from the sale of his father's farm had been deposited, and that he gave no thought to his own future, hoping and praying that those afflicted might derive benefit from what his parents had worked for and saved.

As he said to Mrs. Brownson, the widow suddenly desolated, when she reproached him for a deed that ever lived in her memory, "My good woman, what and whom have I to care for in this world but myself? Am I not strong enough to feel free from care as to the future? Please do not mention the subject to me again, Mrs. Brownson. Mr. Brownson would have done as much for me, I am sure, if the conditions had been reversed."

And at that the widow had burst into tears, and placed both her hands upon Jim's shoulders and had cried out in the agony of her despair:

"God knows, Jim Carbon, that my husband had as big a heart as yours. But I can't forget the man who has sacrificed so much for me and my family. May God bless every footstep in your life's journey! May the prayers of a widow and her children follow you no matter where you go, and be sure, Jim Carbon, that he who has just left us will raise his voice in heaven for you, for surely He who took him away will listen to his appeal for one who has deprived himself—"

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"Now, now, Mrs. Brownson," interrupted Jim Carbon, his face crimsoned by the showers of gratitude, "please remember that our duty in life should be to help one another in times of distress and sorrow, and that what I have done is nothing more than the Father of us all would have me do. To-morrow a friend of mine will come and attend to your work about the place until you can hire some one to stay permanently."

Little did the widow suspect that the "friend" was a man hired and paid by Jim Carbon; and when he stayed, and stayed, notwithstanding the frequent admonitions that it was "too much to expect of any friend of Mr. Carbon's to give up his own time," she began to suspect that some-

thing in Jim Carbon's story was wrong.

"Mr. Decker," she said to Carbon's friend, after he had been doing duty for about four months on the farm, "I want to ask you a question, and I hope you will answer it as honestly as I ask it. Are you doing the work for nothing or are you getting paid from Mr. Carbon?"

"Mu-um," drawled Mr. Decker-known among the neighbors as "Hank"—"it mought be, and agin it moughtn't be. I be jest workin' here, mum, as I be obleeged fer ter work fer any one, fer ter make a livin', mum. And I has my orders, mum, ter continer until I be stopped."

"And who gave you those orders, Mr. Decker?" Mrs. Brownson inquired, feeling that she was unraveling the mystery of his willingness to stay and continue the farmwork.

"That be not fer me ter say, mum; thet be not

fer me ter say."

"Now look here, Mr. Decker, you cannot hide from me that you are being paid by James Carbon. You cannot hide longer from me that that man has made sacrifices for the sake of my family—no more to him than the Arab on the desert. And I want you to know, Mr. Decker, that you are welcome to stay here as long as you want, but that not another penny shall be paid you by Mr. Carbon. Our affairs are in pretty good shape, now, Mr. Decker, and I can manage to pay you. Mr. Carbon shall not—will not—be allowed to spend another cent on us—God bless him!"

The earnestness with which the blessing was delivered left no doubt on the mind of Mr. Decker. He knew that Mrs. Brownson's ultimatum was final. He had formed a liking for the widow, and he had hopes that in the future there might be a time when her grief would be assuaged and

that he might sit in the vacant chair.

"So be it, Mrs. Brownson; so be it. I hev ter confess thet it be Mr. Carbon's doin's. But, seein' as how I be comfertable here, and thet

I be used ter the work and yer ways of wantin' things done, I reckin I hed better hang on a while longer. And, Mrs. Brownson, seein' as yer be a widder an' thet yer hain't got too much of ther world's goods, an' I bein' alone and no one ter care fer, I think I kin scrape along on quite a bit less than I were a-gettin'."

"Thank you kindly, Mr. Decker. I will accept your offer. In a year or so we will be able to pay more, and then I will not forget your

kindness."

This was said in a tone of the deepest gratitude. She did not suspect the motive that prompted this generous offer on the part of the wily Mr. Decker—a widower for seven years.

TICK THE FIFTH

MATTERS had been running along so smoothly and happily these many years in the Boosch and Broakley homesteads that no one was prepared for the events that crowded themselves so rapidly that I could scarcely keep time with them.

It was an afternoon in June, one of those listless, warm June days when nature seems to be drowsy and the very creatures of the air seem to be im-

bued, also, with that listless spirit.

Myra had been sitting on the porch for about an hour, looking wistfully toward the Milford Road, expecting to see each moment the figure of Richard Broakley approaching. Every now and then she would come into the hallway and look appealingly at me, as if she half expected that I would set at rest her anxiety. Just as my hands pointed to the hour of three she heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs on the hard, dusty road.

In a few minutes Richard appeared, riding as gracefully as a trained equestrian. Swinging up to the gate, he sprang lightly from his horse, admonishing him to behave himself and not wander away, and coming up the path leading

to the porch put his hands upon Myra's cheeks and imprinted a few—shall I tell how many? kisses upon her ready, pouting lips.

"Were you afraid I wasn't coming, little one?" he asked, kissing away the last vestige of im-

patience shown by her.

"Yes, I was afraid something had occurred to keep you from me this afternoon, Richard," she answered. "You know, dear, how I am worried about you, and feel alarmed when you do not come on time lest something has happened to you. Oh, Richard," and here her voice was tinged with a sadness that was a revelation to me, who had never heard anything but joyousness come from those charming lips of hers, "how I wish that the time was up and that we could be married. I sometimes feel that you ought not to wait, and that you ought to relinquish your inheritance rather than that—"

Here she broke down. There was evidently something she wished to say, but which could not be uttered owing to the sobs that were welling up in her throat.

"There, there, little one," said Richard, "your fears are groundless. Did you ever see a man in better health than I am?"

And here he straightened himself to his full height, with chest expanded, and who could

but say that he was a model of healthy, robust manhood?

"Myra," he continued, "I, too, feel at times that I ought to give up my aunt's inheritance and set at rest your qualms. But the time is so short now, you know, dear, that it would be foolish for me to give it up and deprive you of some of the comforts it will bring you when we are married."

Here Myra, drying the tears that would persist in coming to the surface, notwithstanding her efforts to keep them back, looked up into his face, the very embodiment of health tingeing his cheeks with nature's color, and said:

"Yes, Richard, it is a short time, that is true. But to me it will seem years. God will, I hope, hear my prayer that all will be well in the end."

"Come, Myra, let us stay here a while, until the sun is down a bit and it is cooler. Then we will take a walk together, arm in arm, as I hope we may journey together for many, many years to come—eh, sweetheart? I will bring a chair out here, where the breeze is blowing, and we will enjoy the scene that is spread out before us. Did you ever see one more lovely and beautiful? See how the mountain, with its haze like a bridal veil, is trying to hide from us in order that it might rob us of some of the beauty of the scene!"

"Yes, Richard," said Myra, in a lighter voice, for his presence and words seemed to reassure her. "It is indeed grand out here to-day."

Then he brought out a willow rocker for her and placed it as close to his chair as was possible without grating them together. He leaned back, his chair tilted against the porch upright, while

she rocked back and forth contentedly.

Myra, Myra! Had you known then! But, thank heaven, he was spared a few hours more to lighten your life and make you enjoy the walk in the shadows of the setting sun. For, when the shadows began to grow on the side of the spacious barn he had urged her to get her sunbonnet, and together, arm in arm, as he had expressed the wish that they would do through life's journey, they had wandered down the road.

How buoyantly they stepped along, both in the flush of youth and health. How lovely nature appeared to those two pairs of eyes that drank in the beauty of the pastoral scene, with the cool winds of the evening fanning the roses on their cheeks. How many subjects they talked about, as they walked on unmindful of the time, until Richard pulled out his watch and said:

"Why, little one, it is half past six. We must go back, for you know your mother doesn't like

to wait supper, even for us."

And they began to retrace their steps, only finding out, then, how far they had walked, wholly unconscious of time or distance. It was after half-past seven when they entered the diningroom, at the table in which were already seated Mr. and Mrs. Boosch and Myra's brother.

"Well, children," said the doctor, "you don't keep good meal hours—we have been waiting fully half an hour. But I suppose we'll have to make allowances, eh?" and he smiled knowingly

at his daughter.

"Yes, father, I guess you will have to overlook our dilatoriness to-day, for the atmosphere was so cool and the roads so good that we scarcely knew how far we had walked. We will do better the next time."

Ah, yes! The next time! How we speak of the uncertain future, little realizing that the morrow may never become to us a yesterday. How little we know what is in store for us on the morrow—yea, perhaps on the very day! But perhaps it is better that we should not know.

The table talk resolved itself into desultory conversation about topics relating to the neighbors, the weather, the crops and such subjects connected with the farm as little interested, apparently, Richard Broakley.

And then came the parting for the night.

Richard went to the stable and brought his impatient, restless horse out in front of the gate, where Myra was leaning, a look of grave care on her face. She was fearful to-night, she knew not why—there was something seemed to whisper to her of misfortune.

Her heart sank as he jumped lithely on his horse's back, leaned over again to kiss her good-bye, and then, wondering what time it was and not wishing to take off his gloves, sprang from his horse and ran into the hallway for a look at my face.

God! Little did I think that that would be the last time that those handsome brown eyes would look at me! Richard Broakley, Richard Broakley, how I wish that lightning, or fire, or earthquake, or destruction of any kind, had overtaken me and spared me from witnessing the heartbreaks, the griefs, the dying out of all happiness in that happy homestead! Richard Broakley, what would I not give to have you again look at me, with your eyes sparkling, in a reproachful sort of way, as you did when you last beamed on me, as if you blamed me for having kept time too fast.

"Why, it is after nine, Myra," he called to her as he walked down the gravel path. "I should have left here at half-past eight at the

latest, for you know there is to be a meeting of the Road Committee at nine. However, sweetheart, I'll make Jerry do his best and recover some of the lost time. Good-night, my Myra!"

He leaped upon his horse, after kissing her again and again, and with a wave of his hand, gave the animal a slight tap with the butt end of his riding crop, and plunged into the darkness of the night.

Myra stood for a moment, listening to the sound of the retreating hoofbeats, and then, with a long, deep sigh, walked slowly toward the house.

There was no peace in her mind. She felt intuitively that some misfortune was about to happen. As she entered her room she sank upon her knees and prayed that the Almighty might be with her Richard and protect him from harm.

For hours she tossed restlessly upon her pillow but finally fell into a peaceful sleep, to awaken to find that the light of her life was never more to bid her good-night again.

TICK THE SIXTH

AT THE time that Myra and Richard were bidding each other good-night, Mary Lash came into the kitchen where, by the open window, sat Jim Carbon, half dozing, half dreaming. What his dreams were no one will ever know, but I, the family clock, can surmise that they were of one in the household where he dwelt. Mary tapped him gently on the shoulder and abruptly said:

"Jim Carbon, you know that Sam Winkle was to take the party from the corner down to the festival in his hay-rig. Well, he's laid up with rheumatism, and says that he won't trust his horses with any one but you. So the folks are all down at the corner, and they sent me up here to ask you if you wouldn't do the driving for them. You know what Winkle's horses are, and no wonder that he won't trust every one with them. Now, you will, won't you, Mr. Carbon? The girls seemed to think that I was the only one could make you do it, and I want to show them that I have a little influence over you."

Could Jim have misconstrued the emphasis in which this was said? Was there a spirit of

reproach in "a little influence"? Could it be possible that Mary Lash thought something of him and was letting him know by this slight innuendo that she was aware of the "little influence" she had over him? Jim Carbon was not a man of vanity—he was too much of a man to imagine that any girl should fall in love with him—yet why had she chided him for the "little influence" she had over him?

Jumping out of his chair, he looked up into her rugged, inquiring face, and the memory of her welcome on the day when he first appeared at the Boosch homestead ever fresh in his mind, took up his hat, extended his hand to her, and said:

"Mary, I shall go at once and bring the team and rig down, and when I drive up to the corner you can say to all, 'See, Mary Lash can bid any man obey her wishes.'"

Mary walked slowly down to the corner from the Boosch homestead—it was almost a mile as the crow flies, only a short step lovers said, and the farm boys sometimes declared it must be three, when they returned from a day's plowing. In answer to the anxious interrogations of the assembled boys and girls she answered:

"Jim Carbon will be here with the team as fast as he can get them ready and drive here."

What a shout there was. And how many quizzically asked Mary what "influence" she had over Jim Carbon to make him respond so quickly to her appeal. Indeed, one young lady—how pretty she looked, with a white flimsy shawl thrown over her head, wound around her ruddy face, and then around her neck, and then tucked under her chin—asked Mary (I wonder if there wasn't a mite of jealousy?) when she expected to change her name from one syllable to two syllables.

But here he comes! What a spanking team was that of Winkle's. No wonder that Winkle was chary of letting any one but Carbon drive them. Standing bolt upright, with those big, knobby hands of his holding the reins like a Roman charioteer, Jim swung up to the corner as if his very life depended upon his getting there at a specified moment.

How the girls waved their handkerchiefs, how the boys cheered and cried out, "Good boy, Jim Carbon!"

And then the crowding into the rig, packed with straw, and cushions, and blankets, and what not! Here were Mary and Kate, and Jane, and Melinda—each one fearful lest in the confusion she should be separated from her Will or her Henry, or her John, or her Edward—screaming

and laughing as they were "boosted" up at the end of the poles protruding from the "stern" of the wagon. And what a time before they were all settled, with Jane complaining that John was taking up too much room, and Edward importuning Melinda to move up closer. He did not think she was taking up too much room, oh, no! To him the more room she occupied the closer she would be to him, bless her heart.

Finally, with one accord they sang out:

"All right here, all right everywhere, Jim Carbon."

And away they went. How those horses strained every muscle to pull that merry crowd up the hills, as if they, too, took pleasure in the proceeding. And how Jim Carbon, with a chuckle to himself, when some of the girls would persist in getting up and endeavoring to change seats, would pull the horses up short, with the result that those standing up were hurled into the laps of the young men, who, in turn, would urge Jim to repeat the performance when they got up, in order that they might reverse matters and be unceremoniously thrown into the laps of the girls.

And when they drove over the bridge and into the lot where were the rigs of all kinds and descriptions—from the one-seated buckboard to the more pretentious six-seated "four-wheeler"—Jim

Carbon took good care to drive where the branches of the trees were hanging low, and again there was such a spilling and screaming and shouting and laughter as only can emanate from the healthy and happy.

What a short time it took to empty the hay rig! Never was a load of hay tossed off so quickly, I can tell you. And off to the candy stand, the strawberry stand, the cake stand, the lemonade stand, and the—but why go on? You know all the stands at a festival that are there to lure

the nickels and dimes from your pockets.

Did you ever, dear reader, attend an ice-cream festival and, having frosted your insides with constant applications of ice cream, meet Kate So-and-so, whom you have not seen for a year, and who gently insinuates that she was "just going over to get a plate of cream"? And did you not, knowing you were making a sacrifice on the altar of truth, respond: "I was just going over to get one myself, Miss Kate. I am so glad we met just at this time"?

It was a pretty sight withal, the festival ground, buried there in the woods, with the darkness of the night enlivened by the flare of the oil lamps, the flickering of which made dancing spectres of the surrounding trees and shrubbery.

Then the return, with the horses dashing along,

eager to reach the stable and rest for the night. And as each farm-house was passed some one would drop off, with a cheery "Good-night" and "Thank you ever so much, Jim Carbon. We

have had a jolly time, thanks to you."

Finally, passing the Boosch homestead, Mary was assisted out by Jim, who then drove the team to Winkle's barn, about three-quarters of a mile away. He unhooked the horses, saw that they had an ample meal, and, whistling gaily to himself with evident satisfaction, took up a lantern, "cut" across the fields, and came out into the main road, where he was rather astonished to see in front of him something white moving back and forth. Holding up his lantern and peering ahead, he saw that a horse was grazing by the roadside—an unusual thing at that time of night and place.

Intuitively he knew that something was wrong. He went up close to the horse, held the lantern

up to its face, and muttered:

"Richard Broakley's horse! What's up, I wonder?"

Then a groan came to his ears in the stillness of the night, and with eyes that tried to penetrate the darkness beyond the lantern's gleam, Jim Carbon, a man of nerve, sought to trace whence came the groan.

Suddenly he stumbled—over a log, he thought—

but holding the lantern down to the ground, beheld the form of Richard Broakley, a pool of blood about his head, which was resting on a stone.

Holding the lantern close to the face of Richard Broakley, Carbon could see at a glance that the death stare was in his eyes.

Leaning over he almost screamed:

"Great heavens, Mr. Broakley, what has

happened?"

Slowly, and with an awful effort, Richard, putting up his arms as if he would bring Jim's face closer to him, said:

"Jim, I fell—off—my horse. I think—I am dying. I have—been here I—don't know how long. Hurry, for—God's sake—and get Myra—and a minister—so that her—mine—our—"

Here his voice became so inaudible that Jim Carbon hardly knew whether he had caught the word right. Putting his ear close to Richard Broakley's lips, he cried out:

"In heaven's name, Mr. Broakley, with all the strength you have left, repeat to me, so that I may not misunderstand it, that word you just said."

And, with all the strength that he had left, Richard Broakley uttered one—and his last—word: "Child!"

Jim Carbon raised his form to the full height of his scrawny figure, and with his arms uplifted, as if in mute appeal to the crescent moon now looking down upon him through a rift in the heavy, low-hanging clouds, ejaculated, from the very depths of his honest, God-fearing soul, two words:

"My God!"

TICK THE SEVENTH

For a full minute Jim Carbon stood with his arms uplifted. Then, recovering himself, they dropped limply to his side. What thoughts seethed through his brain in that one brief moment no living soul can ever tell. Whether of sorrow, or of anger, whether he felt a hatred toward the man now prone at his feet, dying—perhaps dead—or whether he felt a compassion for him only he, himself, can say.

What was he to do? That was the thought in his mind as he recovered himself. Surely, he must take quick action, for that glassy stare could leave no doubt in his mind but that the hours—nay, the very minutes, perhaps—of the life of Richard Broakley were numbered.

How would he break the news to the doctor, to Myra, to Mr. and Mrs. Broakley? How could he, man of strength and nerve that he was, tell them that Richard Broakley was dying—perhaps dead—and that his last word was a confession that he—but, no, he was still living, and while there was life there was hope, and his first thought should be to get him to the doctor's.

He must live—he must—for the sake of Myra, and with no other thought than that in his mind, Jim lifted up the unconscious form lying at his feet, placed it in the saddle of Richard's horse, and holding it there by sheer force of strength, walked by the side of Jerry, who had waited so

long by his master's side.

Slowly, step by step, they went the half-mile from the spot to Doctor Boosch's house. Arrived there, Jim Carbon lifted Richard Broakley off the horse, and carrying him up the gravel walk that he had trod a few hours before with such buoyant step, placed him on the porch where he and Myra had sat in enjoyment of the beauty of the passing day, and went around to the kitchen door.

Mary Lash had not retired as yet, but was setting the table for breakfast, knowing that she would want to sleep up to the very last moment after the gaiety of the night.

Jim gently tapped at the door, and as Mary opened it she noticed the ashen face that con-

fronted her.

"For heaven's sake, Jim Carbon," she said, hearing his heavy breathing from the effort of carrying Richard to the porch, "nothing has happened to you, has there?"

"No, Mary, not to me—but to him—Mr.

Broakley—Richard Broakley. Call the doctor, quick, and tell him that there is some one at the door needs his attention as soon as the Almighty will permit him to come down. And, Mary, do not tell him who it is."

The haste in which this was uttered, the impetuous manner of Jim Carbon, usually so cool and deliberate in his manner, was enough to convince Mary of the urgency of this appeal, and she almost flew up the stairs to the doctor's room, knocking at his door with sufficient force to arouse him at once.

"What is it, Mary?" he asked, in reply to her call of "Doctor! Doctor!"

"Doctor, Jim Carbon says that there is some one on the porch needs your attention immediately—and I tell you, Doctor, that he said it as if he meant that a moment's delay might be fatal."

"I will be down in an instant," said the doctor, who was vainly endeavoring to recall who in the neighborhood was in such ill health as to be in such urgent need of his services.

Slipping on his dressing gown, he came from his room before Mary scarcely had time to report to Jim, who had gone to the front of the house and was awaiting the opening of the door leading to the porch. Mary tremblingly unlatched the door, and Jim brought in his burden.

Mary Lash was not a girl to give way to her emotions or to go into hysterics at the slightest provocation, but at the sight of Richard Broakley as Jim carried him in, and placed him on the oldfashioned horse-hair couch, she felt as if the very floor was giving way under her feet.

Dr. Boosch, with a lamp in his hand, came down the stairway, and going up to the couch, gave one look at the form that was lying there, and exclaimed,

"What has happened, Jim? What is the mean-

ing of this? Speak, man, speak quick!"

As Jim, in as few words as he could, explained the circumstances under which he had found Richard lying by the roadside, Doctor Boosch was examining Richard, putting his ear to his heart, listening intently, feeling his pulse, and gazing into the eyes that had now assumed a glassy, lifeless stare.

What an eternity it seemed to Jim and Mary, who, with bated breath, watched eagerly the doctor's lips for some outburst to relieve their anxiety.

Finally, straightening up, the doctor clasped his hands together, and in a voice that was choked with emotion, exclaimed:

"Richard Broakley is dead! God help us all!"

Aye, God help us all, good doctor!

Help the mother and father of the immortal clay now lying on the couch before you.

Help you and the mother of the girl who so loved the man now lifeless before you.

And, above all, good doctor, God help Myra, the loving, trusting, confiding spirit who was in the thoughts of Richard Broakley in his dying moments.

Help me, too, for the scenes I had to witness not only on that night, but on many others.

You did not see, did you, good doctor, as I saw when they brought in the body of Richard, the white-clad figure step from her room into the hall, and look over the balustrade to see what was going on below?

She did not know, then, who that was lying upon the couch in front of me, as I solemnly ticked away the time. She did not dream for one moment that her Richard was anywhere but safely homeward bound from the meeting in the Town Hall.

For had not she, notwithstanding her fears of the evening, finally fallen into a deep sleep, to dream of her Richard, of their future, of their happy married life? And had she not awakened, upon the sound at the entrance of Jim Carbon with his burden, dreaming of her Richard's manly, handsome face and brown eyes, now staring lifelessly at the ceiling above which stood his Myra?

No, good doctor, you did not see her standing



-and fall a limp mass at your feet-and beside that of her Richard

TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

there, peering down through the darkness as you lowered your lamp to the face before you. She did not know, even then, that you were vainly striving to find a spark of life in one for whom she would have sacrificed her very life.

You did not see her, did you, good doctor, else you would not have uttered so abruptly the words you did:

"Richard Broakley is dead! God help us all!"
But you did—we all did—hear the scream that pierced the night, that startled the marrow in your bones, and that reverberated throughout the house like the wail of agony from a sorrow-stricken soul.

You saw, though—we all did—the white-clad form of your Myra dart like an arrow the full length of the stairs, when she heard your voice of despair, and fall a limp mass at your feet—and beside that of her Richard—her husband-that-was-to-be.

You saw, didn't you, doctor—we all saw— Jim Carbon lift the form of Myra as gently as ever loving mother picked up her creeping child, and carry her in his strong arms, as if she were but an infant, up the stairs and place her upon the bed from which she had been awakened to find that the light of her life had gone out.

Aye, good doctor, God help us all!

TICK THE EIGHTH

THE SUN, rising in the glory of a new-born day, awakening nature from the calm, cool repose of the night, peering through the stained glass of the door leading into the hallway where I was keeping time, cast fantastic shadows upon the sheet thrown over the body of Richard Broakley.

In the room above—in Myra's room—her father had incessantly concentrated his efforts upon bringing his daughter to consciousness. She had raved throughout the night—raved as only an agonized soul thrown into the depths of despair could—and with the dawning of the day, the bright rays of the sun glinting through the delicate lace curtains of the window of her room, there came a moment when she opened her eyes, looked up, and saw her father standing by her bedside, haggard and worn.

She thought, as she gazed up at the kindly, fatherly face of the doctor, that she detected tears flowing from those soft blue eyes. Reaching up to draw his loving face near enough to kiss him, she feverishly asked:

"Papa, it was all a hideous dream, wasn't

it? Tell me, Richard is well and will be here

to-day, won't he, papa?"

The good doctor, unable to contain himself, burst into tears and fell upon his knees beside the bed. With hands clasped and uplifted to heaven, he cried out:

"My child! My daughter! My Myra! May God help you! It was not a dream, but a reality."

Again those eyes closed in the helplessness of her despair. Again the father who had kept the long vigil of the night hastened to apply restoratives. He feared the outcome of the shock Myra had received—the crushing blow of a heart suddenly bereft, of a love snapped in twain; he feared that the mind of his only daughter—"A daughter, eh, good Mr. Clock?" how I remember that!—might become a blank forever.

During the hours he had kept watch over her she had raved about her Richard—her Richard—her Richard—her Richard. Never ending, never ceasing, was that cry. How it thrilled me, down there in the hall, with the love of her life dead in front of me, to hear that agonizing, heart-rending cry of hers—"Richard, Richard, be careful. You are so reckless, you know, and I am so fearful to-night!"

And in her raving, her delirium, she had betrayed her secret to her father—the secret revealed to Jim Carbon by the last word uttered by the

man now cold and lifeless in the hall below. She never knew the effect of the revelation upon her father. She never could know of the quick-drawn breath, the uplifting of the eyes beseeching the heavenly Father to help him—and her—in this, their hour of trial.

"God help us all!" Aye, good doctor, I thought of that exclamation when you came down, just as my hands pointed to the hour of five, for we indeed need His help. You did not know that one other in the world shared the secret—and that one, the plain hired man who sat in the kitchen throughout the night, awaiting your bidding without thought of sleep, without thought of self—with only the thought of Richard Broakley and the broken heart that was bemoaning, in her unconscious despair, the loss of all that had made life so happy, so joyous, so dear to her.

Who could ever tell the many conflicting emotions of the good doctor that night? How could he ever tell the mother of Myra—how could he announce to the neighbors?—how could he tell the mother and father of Richard—how could he?—how could he?—

How could he? Query after query rushed and seethed through his brain, as if they would crowd each other out of the very temples throbbing with the overburdened mind trying to solve them.

As she returned to consciousness the second time, her father was still standing by her bedside, holding her hand and smoothing her matted hair. There was something about his manner that betokened that the love he had borne his daughter had grown deeper—had become almost frenzied. He kissed her again and again, admonishing her to be a good girl and bear her loss with faith in the Almighty to bind the wound in her heart—to put her arms upon the shoulders of her father and cling to him even though the whole world forsake her.

Yes, there was something about his manner that Myra could not understand until, clinging about his neck as if he were the Rock of Ages, she spoke to him and said:

"My good, dear father, I need you and your love now more than ever. You will never lose your love for your Myra, will you—will you, father?"

Who knows the depth of a true, fatherly love—one that condones the failings, the frailties of human nature, the guiding light that leads the pathway from hopelessness to hope eternal?

Such was the love of Dr. Boosch for his daughter, and in response to her piteous appeal—her cry for help to save her from the abyss of the future—he stooped over, almost lifted her from

the bed in the earnestness of his paternal feeling, and said:

"Myra, my daughter, I now know your secret. You will need a father's love and care, my poor child. Cling to me, my child, and do not let

any one but our God separate us."

What a startled look came into her eyes at her father's words. He knew her secret—the secret that she thought had died with the passing out of the life of her Richard! She thought, then, that only two living beings on earth knew it—her good, kind, loving father and herself.

Once again she lapsed into delirious unconsciousness, and during the period, Mrs. Boosch, who had been unaware of what had transpired during the night, came out of her room and inquired of Mary, who was seated in a chair outside of Myra's room, where the doctor was.

"He is in Miss Myra's room, Ma'am. I believe

she isn't feeling well."

Mrs. Boosch, not the least alarmed, as she knew that her daughter had gone to bed feeling as well and full of life as usual, went into the room and was startled by the appearance of the doctor, who seemed to have aged years during that eventful night.

"Why, Henry," she exclaimed, "what is the

meaning of this—what has happened?"

"Mother," he answered in his usual soft manner, "don't ask me to-day. To-morrow I'll tell you all. But there's no need to worry about Myra. She has had a nervous attack, and will be all right in a few hours."

The doctor's wife, ever confiding in her husband, was satisfied with his assurance, and after kissing her daughter's brow—she was evidently sleeping, to her mind—came out of the room and started down the stairs. She had just a glimpse of the sheet of white on the couch when Jim Carbon, coming up the stairs and meeting her half way, abruptly said:

"Mrs. Boosch, not down this way; the other

way.'

"Why, James, what is the matter?"

"Why, you see—you see—er—one of the steps is loose and—I was just going up to get a hammer and nails to fix it."

His blundering, stammering manner, so unknown in Jim Carbon, convinced her that something unusual had taken place about the house and with a firm, determined step she went the remainder of the flight of steps and walked up to the couch with the thought in her mind that some one had overindulged in the festivities of the night before.

She pulled the sheet suddenly down, and, with-

out cry, without moan, without utterance, sank into the arms of Carbon, who had hastened to prevent her from falling to the floor.

And again I repeated, in my slow, measured ticking way, "Aye, good doctor, God help us all!"

For the third time within a very few hours Jim Carbon carried in his arms a human form this time the one whom he had learned to love

and picture as his mother.

Stolid, with seeming indifference, Jim bore her to her room, and placing her upon her bed, with Mary in attendance, went slowly, as if in a trance, up to his own room in the attic. Seating himself on the chair upon which he had sat the first day he had entered that room, he stared blankly at the wall for some time—and fell asleep.

TICK THE NINTH

I WISH I could pass over the unpleasant episodes of that day. How easy it is to describe events in which all is joyousness, gaiety, frivolity! How language flows when we picture in words those fleeting periods in our lives when we are surrounded by our dear ones and our friends, full of life, of

hope, and of happiness.

But how different when we are called upon to describe the feelings of those who have been stricken as if by a death-blow by the taking away, without warning, of their only son. How can I ever tell of the mental torture of the pride of the Boosch household—Myra? How can I describe the anguish that was racking the heart of Dr. Boosch, although, for the sake of his wife—her mother—he kept a calm exterior and repeatedly said to her:

"Mother, God will be with us in our hours of

trial and will help us."

How can I word-picture the unseen, unknown grief in the heart of Jim Carbon? How can I tell of the feelings of one who had learned to love Myra Boosch, but who knew that his love would

never be known or reciprocated, and who, in his unselfish way, had looked forward to the time when those two hearts should be linked together?

Jim Carbon had dozed about an hour, sitting in his chair, when he was aroused by a knock at the door. He jumped up, as if awakened from a weird dream, and opened the door and peered out.

Dr. Boosch, pale, and trembling almost, stood there. He glanced about Jim's room and saw

that his bed had not been disturbed.

"Why, Jim, I thought you were in bed asleep, and wouldn't have disturbed you were it not for the reason that I want you to go over to the Broakleys and break the news to them. They undoubtedly think that Richard had remained in town over night, and will probably expect him by now. I know what a sad task it is, Jim, but I don't feel well enough to perform the duty myself. You will, won't you, Jim?"

His voice was pleading; so much so, that Carbon, out of the very goodness of his good soul, did not

hesitate for an instant.

"I'll go at once, Dr. Boosch. Set your mind at rest. It's a hard—a very hard—thing to have to do, but it must be done. I wish I could do more—I wish I could give my life to bring back that of Mr. Broakley. He had so much to live

for, while I—I—well, no one would have missed me."

"Say not so, Jim Carbon; you are liked by every one here—by all the neighbors—by every-body. You are young yet, and have much to live for."

"You are right, Dr. Boosch," replied Jim in a more hopeful tone. "I'll go over at once."

In a very few minutes Carbon came down stairs, by way of the kitchen, and putting on his hat and coat, started out on his unpleasant mission.

How should he break the news to Richard's parents? What language should he employ? Should he be abrupt in telling them, or should he simply say that something had happened to their son and let them surmise what the outcome might be? Repeating these questions over and over again to himself, he finally concluded that he would tell them frankly, tenderly, that their Richard had passed to the great beyond.

Taking a short cut across the fields he passed by the widow Brownson's house. He felt in no mood, however, to stop and have his usual chat with her or one of the children, but kept on his way. About a quarter of a mile from her house he saw "Hank" Decker looming up in the distance. He wished to avoid him—or anybody, for that matter, to-day—but Hank's keen

eyes had observed him, and there was nothing to do but meet him. He knew that he would be detained for some time by Decker, whose talkative

disposition was well known.

"Why, Jim Carbon, how air yer?" Decker said, putting out his hand. "I haint seen narthin' of yer these menny days. By gum, but it be good fer sore eyes ter see yer lookin' so frisky. Yer look as ef yer mought be able ter eat three square meals a day."

"I am feeling fairly well," returned Jim, his manner plainly indicating that he was in no mood for an animated conversation. "And how have

you been, and how is Mrs. Brownson?"

"Meester Carbon, I be a-feelin' fine. And as ter ther widder she's as perk as kin be. She be a-kinder gettin' over her frettin' about her lonely state, and seems ter be a-gittin' chipper each day. I think she be gittin' han'somer each day, an' I were a-thinkin', Meester Carbon, ther other night, as I sot in ther dinin'-room a-lookin' at her knittin', thet it be a pity fer so fine er 'oman ter be leadin' sech er lonely life."

"But she is not lonely, Hank. She has her

children."

"Aye, but ther children kain't be er comfert thet a man—a good man like me, f'r instance could be ter her. She be a fine housekeeper,

I tells yer, and a pretty savin' one, too, and do yer know, Jim"—here he became familiar in his enthusiasm and put his face so close to Carbon's ear as to tickle it with his chin whisker—"do yer know, sir, thet I hev an idee, seein' her glancin' up at me once in erwhile, thet she be a-gettin' ter like me."

Here he removed his chin whisker from such close proximity to Jim's ear, but held him at arm's length, and, alternately rubbing one of his boots against the other, burst out:

"By cracky, Meester Carbon, do yer know thet I be a young feller yit, an' I haint so bad

lookin', nuther, be I?"

Jim saw there was no evading an answer, so he said, though not with the heartiness that the other expected:

"No, Hank, you are not a bad-looking man. But if I were you I would go rather slow about imagining things. Mrs. Brownson, you know, feels the loss of her husband keenly yet. There may come a time, however, when—"

"Eh, but thet time be a-comin'," interrupted Hank, nudging Jim in the ribs. "I kin see it; I kin see it. Ther be signs thet Hank Decker knows—he hevin' a-married a widder afore."

"Well, Hank, I must go on. I wish you luck, anyway."

"Mought I ask where yer be a-goin'?"

"I am going to see Mr. Broakley on some urgent business. That is why I am in such a hurry."

"Well, ef yer walk fast yer will find him in ther barn unhitchin' of his horse, proberbly, fer he

passed yere a few minutes ago."

"Thanks, Hank, I will hurry on, as I want to see him before he goes into the house," said Carbon, who welcomed the opportunity to get Mr. Broakley alone—it would spare him from some of the sorrow of the scene that he knew he would have to witness if they were both present when he announced the sad tidings.

He walked the half-mile to Mr. Broakley's barn at a swinging pace and saw him pitching hay into the stall where he had just put his horse.

"How do you do, Jim?" was his greeting.

"It is well with me, Mr. Broakley," he said; "I wish it were as well with others."

"With others? What do you mean?"

He had detected the note of sadness in Carbon's

voice, usually so brusque and full of spirit.

"I mean, Mr. Broakley—I mean—that there are times in our lives when we have to tell others—I mean that I would rather give my life than to have to tell you that—that—"

"That what, man?" almost impatiently cried

Mr. Broakley, becoming alarmed at the tremulous, half-choking voice of Carbon.

"I mean, Mr. Broakley, that I must inform you that your son Richard has met with an accident."

"An accident? Was he badly hurt? Where is he? How did it happen? I'll hitch up again at once and go to him."

"Yes, an accident. He was badly hurt-in

fact, so badly hurt that he is-"

Here Carbon felt a lump come up in his throat that choked the utterance of the one word that he wished out—and over with.

"Jim Carbon, you don't mean to say that he was so badly hurt that there is danger of his losing his life, do you, man?"

"Mr. Broakley, your son Richard is—is—

dead."

The father of Richard Broakley stared blankly at Jim Carbon for a moment. The pitchfork fell from his hands, he clasped the bin of the stall with an iron grip, and cried out:

"His mother! His mother! Don't tell her!

It will kill her!"

Never a word about his own anguish. Only for her—his "sweetheart" still, as she was in days of yore.

TICK THE TENTH

JIM CARBON, having relieved himself of his onerous task, completely unnerved by the sight of the man staggering under the blow, explained in as few words as possible what had happened, omitting any reference whatever to Richard's last word, save to say that he had asked for Myra. He desired to leave Mr. Broakley as soon as he could. He could not bear to see any more such grief as had been his lot to witness within a few hours. He would leave the father to break the sad news to Richard's mother. He put out his hand to Mr. Broakley and sorrowfully said:

"Mr. Broakley, may the loving grace of the kind, heavenly Father be with you and yours."

He then started on his return to the Boosch homestead. He walked rapidly, lest he be called back. Glancing over his shoulders, he saw the senior Broakley tottering on his way to the house, his frame shaken by the sobs that were now beginning to relieve the pent-up emotions. He wondered how Richard's mother would bear up under the news. He wondered why such things—such calamities—must be, when all nature seemed

to be smiling under the summer sun, the fields aglow with the ripening grain, the birds singing their lays, the very insects droning their content with the warmth and beauty of that summer's day.

And then his mind reverted to the last moments of Richard, when he had asked for Myra and a minister. He was in a mental struggle with himself. His firm, measured tread, with head bowed down, hands clasped behind his back, eyes set upon the ground—these were evidences that Jim Carbon's thoughts were of the deepest.

Suddenly, as if inspired, he straightened up, brought his fists together with a clash and mumbled

to himself:

"Jim Carbon, you've got to do it—you must do it—for her sake—for the sake of her father and mother—for the sake of all concerned. You must, you must—no matter at what sacrifice."

This outburst of self-command seemed to satisfy him. His step became as light as usual; his lips became set, determined. Whatever he had decided upon was for the best, he felt, even though he should be the one to bear the sacrifice—to suffer—to give up all those who had so endeared themselves to him.

He walked on and on, with springy step, neither caring nor wanting to meet any one, when he

was confronted by Mary, who had gone down the lane from the main road for some exercise after the night and day's vigil by Myra's door. She was anxious to know what effect the awful news had had upon Mr. and Mrs. Broakley. She was anxious to know when the body would be removed. She was fearful that her mistress might steal down into the hall—and then what?

"Jim Carbon," she said, "yours has been a sad mission. I hope that they did not take it too hard."

"Miss Mary," said Jim, "I trust that I shall never again be sent upon such an errand. I did not see Mrs. Broakley. The sight of Mr. Broakley's grief was as much as I could bear. How is Miss Boosch?"

"Miss Myra is in a very critical state, indeed. Her father has been with her constantly and seems very much concerned about her. It is awful, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is indeed awful. The death of Richard Broakley means so much to us all—to Miss Boosch, to her parents, to his father and mother, and to me—yes, to me—much to me. It may be the cause of my leaving forever this happy home that I have had for the last four years. Miss Mary," he said, earnestly, "if I should go away—if I should leave here—you will always think kindly of me, will you not?"

She gave one startled look up at his face—she was so much smaller than the big, powerful man beside her that it was necessary to look up—and exclaimed quickly, heatedly:

"You—you are—going away? I don't under-

stand!"

"You may never understand, Miss Mary—you may never understand. But I want you to think well of me when I am gone. I want to feel that I take your good will and wishes with me. I want to feel as if some one felt a regret at my going."

Mary looked at him with inquiring eyes. What did it mean, his going away at such a time, when his spiritual help was so needed? Why this sudden resolve? Was there a mystery in Richard Broakley's death that had impelled him to this sudden resolution? Could it be possible that he was involved—but, no, banish the thought!

Mary had formed an affection for the big, scrawny, muscular man beside her—an affection which she had hoped would in time be shared by him. She had admired him for his manly strength, for his cool, self-possessed manner, for his willingness to help all at all times, for his bigness of heart—and, above all, for his manifest devotion to all in that household. She could not bear the thought of his going away, and so suddenly, too.

"Do not talk so," she said. "You know as well as I do that if you went away every one here would feel a regret—not I alone. But why should you go? Ain't you happy and contented here?"

"Yes, happy and contented I was. But there is a duty far deeper than my own happiness and contentment that has made me resolve upon undertaking something that will mean my leaving this place, this hame, maybe forever."

this place—this home—maybe forever."

"Jim Carbon, you don't know how lonely I" (she corrected herself hurriedly), "that is, we—will feel if you should go away. But you will write and let me—that is, us—hear from you?"

"No, if I go away to-night or to-morrow no

one shall ever hear of or from me again."

This was more than Mary could bear. She already felt desolate, forsaken, at the very thought of his leaving the homestead. She would miss the companion of her evenings at dominoes, and his help with the chores about the house. Had he not, when he knew that she was to spend an evening out, laughingly taken the dish towel and dried dishes for her? Had he not, when he saw her with the hamper full of wash, taken it from her, when she was staggering under the load, and lifted it up on his big, broad shoulders as if it were full of feathers? Had he not, after a hard day's work in the field, sat up until late

and then gone out to escort her home from some country frolic, paying no heed to her assurances that she was not afraid to come home alone?

She could contain herself no longer and burst

into tears.

"Oh, Jim Carbon, how can you think of such a thing? Have you no regard—no love—for those you will leave behind—for the doctor, who has been so good to you; for Mrs. Boosch, who has been like a mother to you; for Miss Myra and for Arthur?"

"Yes," he replied slowly and solemnly, "I love them all—love them as father and mother, as brother—and sister. But I have a duty far dearer than all to perform, and which rises above all selfish feelings on my part."

She felt as if she would ask him to remain for her sake—to remain that he might learn to re-

turn the love in her heart for him.

He, unaware of the affection that was bestowed upon him, took her hand in his—how it trembled,

he noticed—and said feelingly:

"Mary, I think it is the last time we will shake hands. I shall never forget the first welcome I received from you in yonder house. May God keep and prosper you and make you happy for the many, many years I hope you will live to enjoy life. Good-bye."

And he stooped over and kissed her hand with a fervency that left no doubt of the sincerity of

his prayer.

"Good-bye, Jim Carbon," she returned, the tears welling up in her eyes. "Oh, why do you add to the bitterness of this day—why do you add to the sorrows of those within this hitherto happy

and peaceful house?"

"Mary, it is all for the best. Perhaps some day you will know—will feel that I was right in my decision. Before you go into the house, I wish you would promise me that you'll fix it so that I can see Dr. Boosch in the hall alone to-night. Make some excuse that you have come to relieve him so that he can take a little exercise, but be sure that it's late and that all the other folks have retired. Don't fail me in this—I must see him, and alone. It will be the last favor I will ask of you—may I trust you?"

"You may. Good-bye."

Jim went straight to his room and remained there throughout the entire afternoon and evening. No one disturbed him, as all knew that he had not gone to bed the previous night, and supposed that he was sleeping soundly.

Not so, however. Jim Carbon paced his room for hours, feverishly awaiting the sound of the doctor's footsteps upon the stairs. A fearful

storm had arisen during the night, and he watched it from his window, and compared it to the storm that had arisen in the lives within that house. How like the day it seemed to him. The beautiful day, with its sunshine, then the gathering of the clouds, and then the storm.

As my hands were pointing to the hour of ten he heard the doctor's tread upon the stairs. He opened the door, peered out, and said to himself:

"Now, Jim Carbon, is your time."

TICK THE ELEVENTH

I AM only the old-fashioned family clock, trying in my simple way to tick off this tale, the events of which either transpired in my presence or which I gathered in after years from happenings and conversations, and which I have pieced together.

When I think of that night, with those two men battling before me—not a physical battle, mind you, but a battle of words—as man to man of the groping despair of the one, and the passionate, earnest, pathetic, dramatic pleading of the other to allow himself to be made a sacrifice upon the altar of the gossips of the community; to sacrifice the friends he had made; to sacrifice the reputation he had won for honesty and manliness of purpose; to sacrifice the unblemished name that had been carried by the Carbons through life—ave, to sacrifice his very future for all time to those who had so endeared themselves to him that no others in this world could take their places in his heart—when I think of that night, I say, words seem to fail me.

My, but how the storm raged that night! How the lightning flashes made ghastly at times

the faces of those two earnest, honest men, only to be made mellow again by the soft glow of the hall light. How like their emotions was that interchanging of color.

First the white heat of passion of the father of Myra; then the gradual mellowing, as Jim Carbon, inch by inch, fought the doctor back to his fortress, compelling his slow retreat, compelling recognition of his appeal, of his demand—yes, of his almost imperative demand. It seemed to me, keeping time there and listening to the words that came from the very bottom of the hearts of those two, that Jim Carbon grew taller, more powerful, each minute. He appeared to tower above the good doctor and to take his poignant word-arrows as if they were shafts from Cupid instead of from the father of the girl whose very life depended upon the outcome of this war between them.

Aye, Jim Carbon, I loved you ever since I first knew you, as only an old family clock can love a manly, honest, pure-hearted soul such as yours. But I loved you more that night—I wish there were words in my simple lexicon that could describe how I loved you. How I wished that I could put out my hands and throw them around your neck and cry out:

"Jim Carbon, you may be only a plain farmer's

helper, but the good God above, who measures His disciples not by their station in life, but by their worthiness, will greet you upon your ascension and take you unto Himself and give you the place of honor by His side."

I see you now, Jim Carbon, with your big, scrawny frame towering above the doctor; I see you with your kindly face lighted up by the passion in your soul—not of anger, but of love; I see you, grasping the hand that was extended to you upon the capitulation of the doctor, your face radiant with the joy that was yours in the knowledge that you had won the battle—that you were the victor, not for your own self-aggrandizement, but that you had won the right to give up all for one who had won your—love. Yes, I am not afraid to say it—your love.

I repeat again, Jim Carbon, that I loved you more than ever that night—that night when I saw you pass up the stairs for the last time for so many, many years that I despaired of ever seeing you again.

But I am transgressing.

Three hours before the doctor emerged from Myra's room the village undertaker and his assistant arrived and removed all that was earthly of Richard Broakley. No one was present but those two and myself.

Dr. Boosch, fearful lest Myra should hear the scuffling of feet below and should divine the cause, dared not leave her. Jim Carbon was in his room beyond earshot of the sounds. Mary Lash had the wisdom and forethought to get Mrs. Boosch into the kitchen upon the pretext of asking her advice upon some domestic matters. And so, tenderly and compassionately, those two lifted the body of Richard from the couch and placed it in the wagon without. And I—I ticked on, for is it not my province to keep on ticking away the moments, though other lifebeats have been stilled?

For three hours I kept lonely vigil, in the stillness of the night, undisturbed by sound of living being, down here in the hall. And then I heard Mary Lash knock at Myra's door and enter. A few moments thereafter Dr Boosch came out and walked down the stairs with slow tread. He was no longer a young man, was Dr. Boosch, and the events of the last twenty-four hours had seemed to add years to his life.

He had scarcely paced up and down the hall half a dozen times and seated himself on the couch upon which but a few hours before had lain the body of Richard, when he heard footsteps upon the stairs, and looking up beheld Jim Carbon, with head poised high in air, his jaws set with

grim determination, his eyes fairly blazing in the faint, mellow light of the hall lamp. Now and then the brilliant flashes of lightning penetrated the very innermost recesses of the hall and the parlor beyond, only to fade away again and leave our shadows dancing fantastically like marionettes upon the wall.

"Why, Jim," greeted the doctor, "I thought every one in the house but Mary and myself was asleep. Has the storm kept you awake?"

"No," replied Jim, seating himself upon the couch beside the doctor; "I haven't attempted any sleep; I have had so many things to think of these few hours that my brain seems to be in a whirl. Sleep has been out of the question."

"But you did not sleep the night before, Jim. By the way, you never told me how Mr. Broakley

and Mrs. Broakley—"

"Dr. Boosch," interrupted Jim, "let me spare you a recital of that, more than to say that I saw only Mr. Broakley's father. It isn't necessary for me to tell you of a father's grief at the loss of his only son—of his only child. In fact, I did not come down here to speak of that matter. I came down to talk to you as man to man—not as employee to employer. I feel that I have a right to speak—a right to address you on a matter that concerns you and your wife and your daugh-

ter—that concerns us all. I wish that whatever I have to say will not be misconstrued."

"Why, Jim," the doctor replied, "what has

gone amiss?"

He could not understand the strange, unusual manner of the man addressing him. There was something so peculiar, so unlike Jim Carbon, that he seemed to be a different person. His calm, cool manner had given way to a quick, impetuous utterance of speech, as if the words he spoke were belching from a pent-up, erupting Vesuvius.

"There is something amiss, Dr. Boosch," he said. "There is something I would speak to you about—something I think should be done this very night; I do not think there should be an hour's delay. I am sure that you will agree with me when you know why I am here to make my

request."

Here Carbon paused for an instant, extended

his hand to the doctor, and said:

"Dr. Boosch, from the moment that I entered your home I think I have always kept my place—I have always honored you and have been respected by you. Is there any one in this house who can say aught but good of me?"

The doctor, somewhat taken aback by the

suddenness of the interrogation, replied:

"Why, no. Why do you ask that? Has any

one given you any intimation that it was otherwise?"

"No, sir, only I wanted you to feel that I am not forgetting my position in this household when I tell you the reason why I have come here

to speak to you alone."

Another flash of lightning illumined those two faces before me—one intently and beseechingly looking at the other, wondering what he was going to say, and the other wondering how he should say it.

Finally, after a moment's hesitation, Jim blurted out, with the half-expectation of a man who was

awaiting a death sentence:

"Dr. Boosch, I want to marry your daughter

Myra!"

The good doctor gasped as one who had been suddenly immersed in icy water, looked into the anxious face beside him for what seemed to Carbon an interminable length of time, and, putting one hand on Carbon's shoulder and shaking him as if he would awaken him from a trance, exclaimed:

"Jim Carbon, have you gone mad?"

TICK THE TWELFTH

Have you ever sat in the quiet hours of the night and listened to the ticking of your clock? Have you noticed that while the ticking was regular and rhythmic, at certain periods it seemed to you that the sound of the ticks was so accentuated that it could be likened unto the beating of a muffled drum, and then for a while it seemed as if the ticks were coming faster, and faster and faster, until your tense nerves relaxed and you found that there had been no variation at all?

So it was with me after Jim Carbon had made that startling request and Dr. Boosch had made his doubting reply—"Jim Carbon, have you gone mad?"

It seemed to me that my very mainspring became so wrought up with the tenseness of that brief period of silence that I ticked louder than I had ever done before. I watched anxiously the faces of the two men seated upon the couch before me.

Carbon, cool and calm in his manner, but passionate in his earnestness, looked Dr. Boosch full in the eyes for a moment, while he groped,

evidently, for words further to express himself.

Dr. Boosch, almost doubting his senses, was staring at Jim Carbon as if he half expected that he would break out as a raving maniac. The thought flashed through his mind that Carbon had become unnerved by the tragedy of the day before and had become temporarily insane. He saw, however, only those keen gray eyes searching his as if he would fathom their depths.

Suddenly, as if released by the snapping asunder of a cable, Jim Carbon seemed to find voice

for expression and vehemently said:

"No, Dr. Boosch, I am not mad. I thought you would think so if I should ask your daughter's hand in marriage—and at such a time as this, too. No, Dr. Boosch, I am not mad"—here he arose and stood in front of the doctor, drawing himself to his full height and extending his arms in the earnestness of his appeal. "What I am asking you is not the request of a madman, but that of a man who has spent the day and night in deliberation of this—the resolve of a man who is as sane as ever man could be."

"Jim Carbon, do you know what you are saying? Do you know, Jim, that you are insulting me by your insane proposal to marry—"

"Dr. Boosch," interrupted Jim, "you are the last man in the world I would insult, and your

daughter is the last person of all who would ever receive from me anything but respect—you know that as well as I."

The doctor seemed stunned. He half arose, then sank back upon the couch again. He could scarcely believe that he had heard aright—scarcely believe that his own mind was not giving way under the strain of the many hours of weary vigil by Myra's side. He passed his hand over his brow as if he would dispel the clouds that seemed to befog his brain.

He turned to the man standing in front of him

and heatedly said:

"Jim Carbon, I cannot understand what you mean. How dare you insult me—all of us—by making such a proposal? You, sir, shall leave this house—instantly! Oh, why do you add to my suffering?" he added, his tone modulating somewhat. "Leave me alone; go, and do not let

us ever see you again."

"I shall go, Dr. Boosch," replied Carbon, in a gentle voice. "Such was my intention, anyway. I have not come here to insult you. I have come here, after many hours of conflict with myself, to offer to save the honor of your daughter—to spare her from the taunts of the world—to give her a name. I have no thought of myself, of my future—only of her. Let me marry her to-night—

at once—and then I shall leave this house and go out into the world and lose my identity—my name—to all hereabout for time eternal. I promise you—I swear it—that you shall never see me again."

His hands were held out imploringly; he spoke so rapidly that the words were fairly crowded upon each other. The doctor, quivering in every nerve, attempted to speak further—to stop what he considered a dastardly impertinence upon the part of Carbon, whom he had respected and admired for the years he had been a member of his household.

"Dr. Boosch," continued Carbon, passionately, heatedly, "you must—you must—let me marry your daughter Myra! You must—you must, I say—let me save the honor of your daughter and of her—his—"

"My God!" cried Dr. Boosch, "you know that?"
"Yes," responded Jim, "I know that. I know what the world will say; I know what your daughter is to you and to Mrs. Boosch; I know that by marrying her and leaving her at once I can save her honor and her name. The world will hear that Jim Carbon had married her clandestinely and had deserted her. It will condemn me, it will taunt me with being a scoundrel, it will place upon me the stigma of a man who

had rewarded confidence by a contemptible act—so much the better. The greater the abuse heaped upon me the lighter will be the burden upon her—upon Miss Myra. Listen to my appeal, Dr. Boosch; listen to the appeal of a man who has learned to love you all—to the appeal of one who begs the privilege of sacrificing all that is dear to him in this world to save the honor of a woman he has dared—yes, dared, for he could not help it—to love."

He paused for breath, but only for an instant when he resumed:

"Dr. Boosch, as God is my witness, I swear—I swear by the sainted presence of my father and mother, that I will never breathe a word to a living soul of what shall be a secret between us as long as life shall last. Dr. Boosch," he said, beseechingly, imploringly, "you can see how much this means to you—to Miss Myra, to your family—how little to me, who will go away as an outcast—to drift, I care not where."

"Jim Carbon, for the love of heaven, are you trying to take advantage of a father's misfortune, of a woman's—"

"I am taking no advantage," said Carbon, in a softer, modulated tone. "Dr. Boosch, do not think that I have thought of myself—do not, do not. Let me marry Miss Myra, that all may

be right, and the instant that is done I shall leave—the very instant, no matter if it is in the storm that now rages. Dr. Boosch, can't you understand me, can't you believe me, can't you trust me, can't you see that I only beg the privilege of setting right before the world—"

"Carbon, Carbon, give me time to think,

give me-"

"There is no time to think; your duty is plain—my duty is plain. I plead, I beg, I entreat you, let the world condemn me, let the world's hatred toward me be what it will. Mine was a respected name and only you and your family shall ever know that it is so still. It must be so, Dr. Boosch; can't you understand?"

He paused for breath and looked fixedly at the doctor—now beginning to understand the unselfish motive of the big, plain, scrawny figure in front of him.

"Jim Carbon," said the doctor, his voice almost failing him, "I begin to understand. Perhaps perhaps it would be best. But you—you will sacrifice everything—your home here, your friends, your name—"

"Don't speak of that, Dr. Boosch, don't speak of that. Only speak of what must be done this night—yes, this night. A delay of a day might mean that your daughter's reason might give way—

let her understand that she will be righted before the world to-night, and that she need never see me again. Let her understand that she will be as free from Jim Carbon as if he were dead—for neither she nor any one else shall ever see me again. I shall go thousands of miles away from here, unknown to any living soul, for I shall not carry even my name. I have given this earnest, deep thought, Dr. Boosch, ever since I listened to the dying confession of Richard Broakley."

The doctor arose from the couch, and taking hold of both of Jim Carbon's hands dropped his head upon the broad shoulder of the muscular man and sobbed as if his heart would break.

"There, there, Dr. Boosch, don't take on so. You don't know what a child you are making of me—I feel as if I should want to cry, too. I feel as if I—but none of that! You will—you will grant my wish—my earnest prayer?"

"Jim Carbon, you are one of God's noblemen. I see it will be for the best—for all concerned but

yourself."

"Don't think of me, don't think of me," said Jim, smoothing the whitening hair of the head drooping upon his shoulder. "Think only of her—of her mother—of yourself. I shall drive at once and get Mr. Maujer, the minister; you

can tell him why this haste, and immediately after the—the ceremony—I shall leave this house forever."

"You shall not go out in this storm to-night,

Jim; you must not."

"I shall—at once. I will bring Mr. Maujer here as fast as the team will carry us. And then—then I shall go away without saying good-bye to any one but you and your wife and daughter—forever."

He turned on his heel and went toward the kitchen, where hung his hat and stormcoat. He glanced back as he stood at the door, and saw the good doctor fall upon his knees, his frame shaking convulsively, his hands uplifted to heaven, and heard him cry out:

"Heavenly Father, pity me! Pity me! Pity

us all!"

And I, the old family clock, ticked on.

TICK THE THIRTEENTH

CRASH followed crash, the distant mountains sending back the reverberations as if they were loth to take responsibility for the awfulness of the storm and wished to return the thunderous noises whence they came.

Jim Carbon stood for an instant at the kitchen door and watched the blazing of the trail of the lightning. There was scarcely any intermission between the flashes of light, and the very heavens seemed to be weeping in unison with those in that household that night.

The good doctor, after a few moments of silent communion with his God, arose and went up to his daughter's room. Myra, in the interval of her father's absence, had tossed in half conscious, half delirious unrest. She had heard Carbon close the kitchen door and had heard his footsteps upon the gravel walk leading from the house to the barn. She turned wearily to Mary, who had been keeping vigil by her side during the absence of Dr. Boosch, and asked:

"Mary, who is going out on such a night as this, and at such an hour? Surely, there must

be some urgent mission to take any one out tonight, Mary. Has anything happened? Have

they come to take Richard away?"

"Miss Boosch," replied Mary, glancing out of the window and discerning the tall, masculine figure that she had learned to know—yes, and to love—so well, "they took Mr. Broakley away yesterday afternoon. He is home with his parents now.''

"Home with his parents? Home with his parents? Oh, Mary, Mary, why did they take him away? Why didn't they let me see him? Why didn't they let me put my arms around his neck and kiss him good-bye? Let me go to him let me join him in heaven-let me see his face again! Mary, Mary, my heart is breaking—

is breaking—

She had half arisen in her supplication. The wounded and crushed spirit fell back upon the pillow. Mary brushed back the disheveled hair from that handsome face, now seemingly of marble, She saw that and smoothed out the bed covers. unconsciousness had again given relief to the unbearable wound that had been inflicted upon that tender heart beating so erratically—now slow and regular, as if she were roaming with the light of her life on the mountain side; then beating faster and faster, until it seemed as if

every nerve in that body must snap asunder.

Mary turned again to the window and saw Carbon, lantern hanging on arm, hitching up the team to the covered carriage that the doctor used in his professional visits. What was going on, she wondered. Was the doctor going down to see Carbon off? Why should he leave so sud-

see Carbon off? Why should he leave so suddenly? Why this mystery? She watched Jim hurriedly hitching up as if his life depended on it—she watched him as he turned his face to the storm mercilessly beating down upon him. My, she thought, what a night for any human being to be out in—above all, Jim Carbon, for whose safety she uttered a silent prayer.

She glanced around at the listless form in the white-covered bed. Then she again glanced out of the window at Carbon, just as he drove out of the gateway, his lantern hanging beside his head and emblazoning his ruddy face upon her memory with that last look she had of him. Then she turned to the bed again, and throwing her arms about the unconscious Myra, exclaimed sorrowfully, bitterly:

"Miss Myra, your love is dead. And my love—my love, is dead to me, too, and gone forever!"

Tears—the outlet for woman's grief, always—flowed upon the coverlet. Silently, softly, was

Mary weeping when the doctor re-entered the room.

"Why, Mary, what is the matter?" inquired the doctor, somewhat startled. He was alarmed he feared that his daughter might have become delirious and have betrayed to Mary Lash what he would not have her know for all the world.

"Nothing is the matter, Dr. Boosch," Mary replied; "nothing is the matter, only it grieves me

to see Miss Myra suffer so."

"Mary, you must be worn out. I should advise your going to bed at once. I shall not require anything more to-night. Oh, Mary, before you go I wish you would step into Mrs. Boosch's room and tell her that I would like to see her here—in Myra's room. She has undoubtedly retired, but tell her that I wish to speak to her here."

"Very well," replied Mary, as she softly closed the door. She went to the room of Myra's mother

and gently aroused her.

"Mrs. Boosch, the doctor asked me to tell you to step into Miss Myra's room at once. He wishes to speak to you there."

"Why, Mary," said Mrs. Boosch, startled by the sudden awakening, "Myra is not worse, is

she?"

"No, I think not. She appears to be about the same. But evidently there is something

on the doctor's mind. Jim Carbon has just driven off with the two-horse rig, and he seemed to be in great haste, too."

"What, out on such a night as this? What

can be the matter, I wonder?"

"I don't know, Mrs. Boosch. Everything seems to have gone wrong since Mr. Broakley's death—everything."

"Well, Mary, it seems that such things must be—it is not for us to try to divine the ways of Providence. I will go to Myra's room in a moment. Good-night, Mary; get a good night's rest, for you certainly need it."

"Good-night, Mrs. Boosch. I hope that all will turn out right and that we will be happy

again—some day."

Mary went upstairs to her room and seated herself upon the edge of her bed. The candle that she placed on the little dressing-table flickered and seemed to want to go out, as if it knew that Mary needed it no more that night But Mary sat there for a long, long time—she knew not how long—thinking of the events of the past twenty-four hours. She could not fathom—she could not understand—the mystery of Jim Carbon's leaving that house so suddenly. What had Richard Broakley's death to do with him, that he should go away—forever? Why did he drive away so

suddenly? Would he ever come back again? These and a thousand more queries arose in her mind. Finally, tired nature overcame her and she dropped back upon the bed and fell into a fitful, troubled sleep. The candle flickered on, until its life ebbed out and left the room in darkness save for the intermittent illumination made by the flashes of lightning. The storm still continued to rage fiercely—there was no abatement, apparently, either in the thunderous rolls or in the incessant downpour of water.

Mrs. Boosch went to her daughter's room. Her soft eyes looked at the doctor's worn, haggard face. She, too, had aged in the past few hours—what mother would not age under the mental shock that she had received?

"Mother," said Dr. Boosch—he had called her "mother" ever since the birth of their son, their first-born—"I would not have disturbed you were it not for a matter that concerns us all. I did not wish to leave Myra alone, else I should have gone to you. Mother, I sent for you that I might tell you in the presence of our Myra that Jim Carbon is going to marry her."

"Marry her—marry Myra? Jim Carbon, the hired man—marry our Myra? Henry, do I understand you aright? Jim Carbon, the hired

man, marry—marry—our Myra?"

"Yes, mother, you understand me correctly. Yes, Jim Carbon—hired man he was, but will be no more—for he is going away. He may have been only a hired man, but the heart that beats in that man's body is worthy of our Myra—or of any woman that lives. Mother, wait until Myra awakens and then I will tell you what has just taken place between Carbon and myself, and I am sure that you will agree with me that it will be for the best."

Ever trusting in her husband's superior wisdom, Mrs. Boosch placed her hands in his and looked up into those kindly eyes beaming down upon her with the love that had ripened and mellowed with

twenty-five years of companionship.

"Yes, mother," he continued, "I have prayed long and earnestly that the Almighty might show us a pathway leading from the darkness that has overcome us all into the light. And He has. He has sent one of His disciples—plain Jim Carbon, the hired man—to lead us into that pathway, mother. May He bless every footstep of that young man's life—no matter where he may go—no matter what he may undertake—that is my prayerful wish."

Myra at this moment opened her eyes, languidly, as if she had awakened from a troubled dream. Her eyes looked inquiringly at her

mother. She wondered why she was up so late. The storm, she supposed, as a crash echoed and re-echoed over the hills, had frightened her and she wished to be near her protector in all of life's storms.

"Myra," said her father, "I have something to tell you—something that you must listen to with patience—you must forget the past—you must think of the future. And what I am about to say means so much to your future—to our future—that I am sure you will see that it should be done—and at once."

"What is it, father? You know how I love you, father, and how much I need your help and counsel now. What is it you wish me to do? Have you ever commanded me that I have not obeyed?"

"No, my child, never. But this is not a command. It is a matter that is left with yourself and your God."

He then went into a detailed account of his conversation with Carbon, omitting nothing whatever. Myra listened attentively—she did not exhibit the spirit of revulsion that her father had half expected—and when he had finished, with the remark that he looked for Jim's return in a very short while with Mr. Maujer, she turned wearily toward his anxious face bending over her,

reached up and put her arms about his neck, kissed him fervently, and said:

"Father, father—my father—it shall be so! Mother, mother—my mother—it shall be so! You still love your daughter, do you not—mother, father?"

Those two bent over their child and each imprinted a kiss that assured her that she would never lose their parental love—through storm and sunshine, through darkness and light, that love would be with her forever—yes, and for aye.

TICK THE FOURTEENTH

CARBON, driving the team through the storm that night—the team that knew his guiding hand so well that they needed no urging-saw nothing ahead of him but the muddy, heavy road, now dark as pitch and again almost as light as day. He had been out in storms before, but he could not recall any like this. With the flashes of lightning making visible the heavy, angry clouds, rolling like banks of black smoke, there came peal upon peal of thunder—scarcely had one died away in the distant mountains, to be thrown back again, than it was followed by another.

Truly, Carbon thought to himself, the elements were at war with themselves. He kept steadily on, until the beckoning colored lights of the railroad crossing assured him that he was within the limits of the town and that a few minutes would bring him to the parsonage of the Rev. David Maujer. His team was panting and

sweating when he drove up to the door.

The town clock had just tolled in monotone the hour of twelve as he jumped out of the carriage and sprang up the steps. He rang the bell

several times, as he felt that it would require some time to make the inmates hear in the noise of that storm. There was no need for that, however, as the second jingle had scarcely died out when the door opened and Mr. Maujer, in dressing-gown, peered out at Jim.

"Mr. Maujer," said Carbon, "can you come

with me at once?"

"Who are you? I cannot distinguish your face here. Oh, yes, I recognize the voice now—you are Jim Carbon. What is the trouble? I hope that nothing serious has happened. Won't you step in? Certainly I will go with you—at once. My calling does not permit of hesitation where duty calls, you know, Jim, and I am sure you would not be out in a storm such as this were your mission not urgent. However, you can explain to me when we are on the way. I will be ready in a minute or more. Won't you come in?"

"No, thank you; my horses are heated by the fast driving I have been doing, and I had better put blankets on them, for this rain is chilling.

I will wait outside."

Jim Carbon, thoughtful even for the animals, carefully blanketed the horses, spoke a word to them—"Good boy, Tom; good girl, Jennie"—petted them and jumped into the carriage and awaited the appearance of Mr. Maujer.

"Now, sir, I am with you," cheerily called out the minister, in an incredibly short time. "I

didn't keep you waiting long, did I?"

"No, indeed. I wonder how you could have dressed so quickly. You certainly have established a record in my mind for rapid preparation. This side, sir, where you won't get the benefit of so much of the storm. You see, I have provided all the protection that was possible, but we can't expect to escape it all."

"My, but what a night this is! It is about the worst I have seen in many years. How are all the folks up at the farm?" Mr. Maujer asked, as he swung lightly into the carriage and covered himself with the blankets and drew down the

weather.

Jim removed the covering from the horses, threw them under the seat, jumped in, and with a

curtain that Carbon had improvised for stormy

"G'lang, Tom; g'lang, Jennie," answered:

"Pretty well, sir; all but Miss Myra. I understand that she takes the death of Mr. Broakley very much to heart—so much so that her father has been by her bedside almost constantly since she learned the awful news."

"Yes, that was a sad accident, Jim—a sad accident. I was at Broakleys' last night and gave them what little spiritual consolation was in my

My heart bleeds for them. Their only son, their only child—who of us can feel what such a loss must mean to them?"

"Mr. Maujer," said Carbon, when they had fairly started, "I will not say just now why I have come for you—I think perhaps it would be better if Dr. Boosch explained to you personally—you

won't feel hurt, will you?"

"My good man," returned the minister, "whatever duty I may be called upon to perform will be done with gratitude for the many kindnesses I have received from Dr. Boosch. I owe him much, Jim, for he has been my adviser and friend ever since my boyhood-yes, I owe him much."

And truth it was-that he owed much to the doctor. For when David Maujer was a boy he was a wayward one. Many and many were the complaints that were made against him—complaints that ran from boyish pranks until they finally culminated in robbery—the robbery of Vender's grocery store. One morning when Peter Vender opened his store he found that some one had broken into it and had rifled the cash drawer of its contents—not much, it is true, only thirteen dollars and some odd cents—but robbery is robbery, in the eyes of the law, whether the sum be large or small. Suspicion at once fell upon David and two companions—evil companions,

such as will lead a good boy astray, sometimes and under repeated and rigid questioning he had finally confessed his guilt.

David's father had been bedridden for years, and as a consequence the bringing up of the lad devolved upon his mother—herself more or less sickly and unable to devote much attention to him, as she had three other children, younger than he. And so it was that David, practically left to his own resources, had drifted from bad to worse, until at the age of seventeen he stood charged with the crime of robbery.

Then it was that the good doctor, who had taken a liking to the boy, notwithstanding his waywardness, had stepped into the father's place and gone to the town jail and prayed with David and importuned him to break away from his evil companions and ways-prayed with him until the boy had burst into tears and had dropped upon his knees and begged the good man to help him in this, his hour of spiritual need.

Peter Vender was an honest man—as honest in his business dealings as in his home life. was a Christian man—was Mr. Vender—but hard and inflexible, like so many Christian men who cannot understand that we are all prone to err and sin, and that He who died that we might be saved was forgiving and loving and gentle

to those who had sinned. Dr. Boosch had gone to him and pleaded and begged him to withdraw the charge against David, urging the condition of his father and the helplessness of his mother as in a measure responsible for the boy's waywardness.

But Peter Vender could only understand that robbery was a crime, and there could be no extenuation for any crime, in his mind. Dr. Boosch had said to him:

"Mr. Vender, can you not feel for the father and mother? Can you not put yourself in the place of those parents? Imagine them, loving their boy as much as you do your children, Mr. Vender, parting with him now—now, when they need his help and comfort, for such he will be to them in the future, I feel sure. David has promised me to mend his ways and become a good Christian boy, and I believe from the bottom of my heart that he means to do so. Give him another chance, Mr. Vender, and I am sure that you will never regret it."

"Doctor Boosch," Vender had replied, "I am a man of business. Everybody knows I am honest—have been and always will be. If I should let pass any such crime as this boy has committed it would lead others on, for only the fear of punishment deters some persons in this world from committing crime. No, sir, I cannot

overlook it. This boy must be punished as he should be that others may profit by the example made of him and lead honest lives."

Again and again had the doctor renewed his pleading, but all in vain. Mr. Vender was obdurate, and finally Dr. Boosch had given up the task of endeavoring to break that iron will. He had then gone to Justice Eilen's house and had pleaded so long, so earnestly, that finally the justice had weakened, and said to him:

"Dr. Boosch, I cannot refute your arguments—it is true, the boy will not become any better in the reformatory. I cannot, however, do anything but find him guilty—that will always hang over his head—I cannot do otherwise, for he has confessed that he committed the robbery. But I will suspend sentence—and may he prove worthy of the confidence you have in him. Few boys in trouble have such a friend as you, Doctor."

And from the day of his trial David Maujer had led a different life, guided by the help, the advice, the counsel of his honored friend. From a wayward boy he had grown to be a man who loved the word of the Master, and eventually had become a minister of the Gospel. How different might have been his life had he been thrown into association with the viciously inclined inmates of the reformatory!

All this had happened seventeen years ago, and as the recurring past flitted through his mind, Mr. Maujer felt that he did, indeed, owe much to the good doctor.

Jim Carbon wondered why Mr. Maujer had remained silent. He, too, was in deep thought, and before the pair were aware of it the horses were turning into the lane leading from the main

road to the homestead of the doctor.

"Why, Jim, we certainly did clip along, didn't we? I had no idea that we were so near the house," said Mr. Maujer, turning to Jim, who, aroused from his reveries, was also surprised at the short time it took them to make the trip back.

"Well, here we are," said Jim, as they drove up to the door. "I will put up the team at once, for they have done a good night's work and

certainly need the rest they are entitled to."

The minister rang the bell, which was instantly answered by Dr. Boosch, who warmly greeted his visitor, and I, the old family clock, who witnessed the greeting, can assure you that the warmth of the minister's response was enough to make any one feel that those men were very, very dear friends indeed.

TICK THE FIFTEENTH

"HANG YOUR stormcoat and hat on that rack, there, David. And then I wish you would step up to Myra's room with me," said the doctor.

"Myra? There is nothing serious the matter

with her, I hope," replied the minister.

"No; but there is a matter about which we are going to hold a family council. Mrs. Boosch is up there, also. Arthur, you know, has been away, traveling on business for his firm, and we do not expect him home for several weeks."

"Yes, I heard Arthur was away. I saw Richard's father and mother yesterday. The funeral service is to be held this afternoon at three

o'clock. Will you be able to attend?"

"No, I will not be able to go. Myra is in such condition that I would not dare leave her; it would be too great a risk just now. Mrs. Boosch will go, however, as one of our family should be present. I would much rather she would not, for the death of Richard means much to us, also, Mr. Maujer, and I am afraid she might break down. But, as I say, one of our family should be present. Come, let us go upstairs."

My hands pointed to a quarter past the hour of one as Dr. Boosch looked inquiringly at me. My, how the lines were drawn on that face, always so radiant and benignant! How dimmed the eyes seemed to me, so accustomed to see them sparkle as he looked up at me when he started out on his professional rounds and asked of me, "Well, Mr. Clock, what good word will I bring home to-day, eh?"

Entering Myra's room the minister was trying to conjure up in his mind why he had been sent for so hastily. He had gotten the impression that some one—he knew not whom—had been suddenly stricken and needed his spiritual consolation. He had come prepared, mentally, to administer the last rites to some one. But Myra, suffering from the shock of Richard's death, appeared to be in no imminent danger, and her mother, though the lines of care were upon her brow, appeared to be enjoying good health.

"How do you do, Mrs. Boosch? And how are you, Myra?" he said, cordially shaking each by

the hand.

"We are fairly well," answered the doctor's

wife; "fairly well, all things considered."

"Now, Doctor," said Mr. Maujer, turning to him, "what can I do for you? What help can I give you?"

"David"—the doctor spoke now as he did in the days gone by when he had counseled him from evil companionship and had led him into the paths of righteousness—"David, you have been called here on a mission of mercy—on a mission

—I hardly know how to begin to tell you."

"Dr. Boosch," replied the minister, "friend, counselor, adviser of my youth, tell me what is in your heart. Don't you know that I would give up my life to serve you? Do you think for a moment that I have forgotten what I owe to you—do you think that a boy snatched from a life of crime like a brand from the fire can ever forget his obligation to the man who had saved him from a life such as he was leading? Mrs. Boosch, Myra," he continued, turning to each appealingly, "let me assure you that whatever is asked of me will be granted—yes, from the very bottom of my heart."

The good doctor then told him, from the very beginning, how Richard had fallen in love with his daughter, of their courtship, of their looking forward to an early marriage, of the death of his aunt, with the stipulation in her will as to his age before marrying, and then—of the accident that had befallen him and the revelation that

had been made by Myra in her delirium.

Continuing before his wife and daughter, the

man of God listening intently, Dr. Boosch told of Carbon's self-sacrificing offer to marry Myra for the sake of saving the name and honor of the Boosch family. He dwelt long and earnestly upon the goodness of Jim Carbon, vowing that such a man as that would surely get his reward, and that he wished for him, wherever Fate might lead him, all the good that might be bestowed upon living mortal.

Jim Carbon had taken plenty of time putting up the horses for the night. He wished to give the doctor ample opportunity to explain why he had so hastily summoned the minister. He did not wish to be present during that explanation. He wished to avoid, as much as possible, any show of gratitude on the part of the good doctor

and his wife.

Furthermore, he wished for time to think of what he would do when he left the house—where he was to go. Although he had given considerable thought to the matter the day before, he was still undecided where to go. And even now he could arrive at no decision, further than that he would go out West, somewhere. He returned to the house, the rain still pouring down in torrents, unlocked the front door, hung his stormcoat on the rack, and, hat in hand, went up the stairs to Myra's room.

Ah, Jim Carbon, I did not know that I would ever see you again—ever again hear that honest, manly voice of yours—ever again see those gray eyes of yours looking wistfully at Miss Myra through the front-door glass as she tripped gaily along the road with her Richard. I felt as if a part of my being went out when you went out that night, Jim Carbon, for I knew you loved her and worshipped her.

As Carbon entered the room he saw a picture such as he never forgot to his dying day. There was Myra, lying on the pure white bed, her head imbedded in the pillow, her hands clasped together in prayer on the immaculate spread, her beautiful face ashen white; there was Dr. Boosch, on his knees, beside her, head bowed down, and hands also clasped in prayer; beside him his good wife, weeping softly, the tears falling upon the coverlet; the expounder of His word had just gone down upon his knees and said "Let us pray" as Jim stood for a second by the door.

Carbon dropped upon his knees, also, clasping his hands on a chair—her chair, so delicate, so frail that Jim scarcely rested his hands on it, lest he might break it by the pressure of his strong, muscular arms.

Oh, the solemnity of that scene—the fervency of the prayer of the man of God and the "Amen!"

and "Again amen!" uttered by his hearers! Little wonder that it impressed itself so forcibly upon the memory of Carbon. Little wonder that those present often thought of it in after years, when the clouds had been dispelled and sunshine again reigned in that abode. Little wonder, I say, that Myra often repeated the prayer of the good man so earnestly pleading with his Master for the welfare of that little circle of gropers

in the dark seeking the light.

Long and earnestly the minister prayed. Long and earnestly he pleaded with the Almighty to forgive his sins and trespasses—to forgive the sins and trespasses of those present. Fervently did he pray for the daughter lying there and the man who was about to wed her. The words welled up from his heart, and at times his voice became faint with emotion. Every word he uttered was sincere, heartfelt, honest. And when he had concluded—"We ask this in the name of Christ, our Redeemer. Amen!"-the responsive "And again, amen!" came from that little band in unison as they arose.

"James Carbon," said the minister, "Dr. Boosch has explained all to me. Are you still

resolved upon keeping your promise?"

"I am, indeed, sir," came from Jim, without hesitation.

"Very well; I will, with the consent of Mr. and Mrs. Boosch and Miss Myra, perform the ceremony. Have you a ring, James Carbon?"

"Yes, sir-my mother's. Here it is."

Myra, turning uneasily in her bed, glanced up and saw Carbon's eyes resting upon her. There was nothing in his glance that would betray his love for her—nothing that would make her feel that there was one who would give his very life could he but fill the void made in her heart by the death of Richard Broakley. He had steeled himself—yes, steeled himself—that she might never know of his love for her. She would still think that Richard's was the only love she had ever won.

Bidding them join hands—how it thrilled him to hold that little hand of hers in his, so big and broad and muscular!—Mr. Maujer then began to read the impressive service.

How different it all was, flashed through Myra's mind—how different from the elaborate wedding she and her Richard had pictured, with its gaiety and joy, with its flowers and bridesmaids and bridegroom—how different, with this man beside her for whom she had no love, from what it would have been if that were Richard standing there—how different—

She could no longer control herself. She



Carbon drew himself erect, as if he would check any possible weakness

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LATUR, LENOX AND

burst into hysterical sobs. And it was thus when the minister, bidding Carbon slip the ring—his mother's ring—upon her finger, pronounced them man and wife.

"That which God hath joined together let

not man put asunder!"

As the minister uttered this Jim turned to Mrs. Boosch, now silently weeping, extended his hand, and said:

"Good-bye, Mrs. Boosch; let me thank you let me thank you all—for the many kindnesses you have shown me; good-bye, Dr. Boosch; good-bye, Mr. Maujer—God bless you all."

He turned, took up his hat, and started for the door. Myra—his wife—had swooned. He went back, took up the little hand he had held but a moment ago, and fervently kissed it, saying "Goodbye"—nothing more.

Then, as if fearing that he might weaken in his resolution, Carbon drew himself erect, as if he would check any possible weakness, and again started for the door. As he went out he heard Dr. Boosch call out:

"Don't go, Jim Carbon; don't go just yet."

But he paid no heed to the call. He walked hastily—firmly and stolidly—down the stairs and out into the night—that night, with that awful storm still raging. Nothing did he take with

him, and it was only after the door had closed and the spring lock had shut him out that he was aware of the fact that he had not taken even his stormcoat with him.

Dr. Boosch and the minister hastened to recall him. They went up to his room, thinking he had gone there to make preparations for his departure, little dreaming that he would go away without taking anything whatever with him. But he was not there. They looked about—all his belongings were still in the room.

On his table lay his Bible, with its inscription "From Mother to James." Going over to it the minister saw that it was open. A pencil mark had been drawn around Timothy iv. 5-8, and calling Dr. Boosch Mr. Maujer read:

"'But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

""For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

"'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

"'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me on that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

TICK THE SIXTEENTH

Dr. Boosch leaned over, read those passages again to himself, while the minister stood by, looking at the face of his friend. What a study was that face—benevolent and kindly and full of Christian love—as he read again: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my

departure is at hand."

Turning to Mr. Maujer, the good doctor said: "David, I verily believe that young man has already gone—gone with naught else than what he had on. If so it be, I will lock up this room, and it shall never be disturbed by living mortal as long as my life shall last, unless by Jim Carbon. Mayhap—yes, mayhap some day he will come back. Some day, perhaps, when Myra's wounded heart has healed she will realize the sacrifice that James Carbon has made—will understand the unselfish motives that prompted him to be 'ready to be offered.' May heaven bless him this night and all the nights of his life."

"Amen to that," responded the minister.

"Come, let us go down stairs. I will lock the door, and in the morning I will notify every one

that it must never be opened unless by myself or by the hand of Carbon."

He went to the windows, closed them, latched them, pulled down the shades, put the bookmark in the Bible where were the passages quoted, closed it reverently, and put it in the drawer of Carbon's little washstand. Then he turned to the door, gave one last look at the interior of the room, and closed and locked it.

Would it remain locked forever? Would any hand other than Jim Carbon's ever open it? Would he ever be heard from or of again? These were the thoughts that were in the mind of the good doctor as he turned the key in the lock and withdrew it, putting it carefully in his wallet. He knew Carbon as a man of his word; he knew that he would go thousands of miles away; he knew that he would hide his identity, as he said he would. How, then, would they ever hear of him again?

Aye, Dr. Boosch, these were questions that only the future could answer—and who of us can read the future? Time only could solve the problems that you propounded to yourself, good doctor, and it was for me to tick on, and on, and on, counting off the minutes, hours, days, and years before those problems were solved.

"Come, let us go down stairs," repeated the

doctor. "We will go back to Myra's room, where I wish you to say a prayer, and then you will retire for the night. You will occupy Arthur's room, and I will see that you are not disturbed until it is time for Mrs. Boosch and yourself to leave to attend the services over Richard Broakley. By the way, David, are you going to conduct the service?"

"Yes, it was the wish of his father and mother that I should do so."

They returned to Myra's room. Her mother had sat by her side during their absence, watching and weeping. Once only had her daughter recovered herself, and then she had looked up appealingly at her mother and feebly asked:

"Mother, is it all true? Has my marriage

to-to him-really taken place?"

"Yes, my child, it is true—you are the wedded wife of James Carbon—it is all for the best, my daughter—it is for the best that it is so, else your father would not have so willed it."

Here her father and the minister entered the room. She turned to him and looked up into his eyes beseechingly.

"Has he—gone, father?" she asked of him.

"Yes, my Myra, he has gone—gone out in this storm—never to return, perhaps."

"It is well, father; it is well."

She closed her eyes and tenaciously clung to his hands. "Do not leave me alone to-night, father," she cried—"do not leave me alone—not to-night."

"Content yourself, my child. I shall be with you to-night and all day to-morrow—or to-day, rather, for it will soon be day. I will not leave

you, my Myra."

She heaved a heavy sigh of relief and wearily closed her eyes again. Mr. Maujer said a short prayer, and then was shown to Arthur's room

by the doctor.

"Dr. Boosch," said the minister, as he took his hand to bid him good-night, "no one must know for the present that I performed the wedding service or when the wedding took place. I should merely say that they had been married and that your daughter has her marriage certificate. There will be gossip for some time, of course, but I shall announce to all that they should refrain from asking you any questions. Leave that to me. Time will heal all things, and ere long the matter will have passed from the minds of the neighbors. All will be well in the end, if we put our trust in Him."

"How can I ever repay you, David?"

The minister held up his hand warningly. "Don't make me repeat how much I owe to you,

Dr. Boosch, by speaking of that. Whatever I, as minister of the Gospel, can do for you or yours—day or night, at any and all times—will be little in payment for my obligation to you."

"Good-night, David," said the doctor, with a grasp of the hand that assured him of his eternal

friendship.

"Good-night, Doctor. May the morn become brighter and the clouds of your life be succeeded by the bright sunshine that must inevitably follow a night of darkness and of storm."

Returning to Myra's room, the doctor said to his wife: "Come, mother, you had better go to bed now. Everything is settled and peaceful for the night. I will remain here with Myra. See, I have fixed up the cot for myself, and will promise you that I will get a good night's rest."

He kissed her as warmly as he did when they were lovers betrothed, and she passed her hands over his brow and whitening hair, as was her wont when he was troubled. Hers was, indeed, a faith abiding in the strength of her husband—in the trust she had placed in him when she, too, had responded "Amen" to the closing words of the minister who had proclaimed them man and wife—these many years agone—"That which God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

A good wife, and true, she had been to him,

and though time had left its mark of the passing years in the furrows on the brow and the whitening hair, the love they bore each other was as youthful as it was in their courting days. She had never disputed her husband's will, and he, knowing this, had never crossed her in any wish or desire. And so, when she bade him good-night, she feared not of the storm—the lightning might flash, the thunder might roll—for was there not in the house her husband, her protector? She feared nothing while she knew of his presence.

When his wife had left the room he turned to his daughter and said:

"Myra, my child, there are allotted in this life a certain amount of joys and sorrows. It is easy for us to bear the joys—but the sorrows are the crosses and crowns of thorns that we must wear through our lives; the sorrows make the joys seem greater; the sorrows make us the more grateful for the joys that come, as we welcome the dawn after the darkness of the night. And so, my child, you must patiently bear your grief, in the hope that some day you and Richard will meet again, where there is no parting, where there is no pain. Myra, Richard is to be buried to-day."

She half arose in her bed, her hair falling down over her shoulders, framing her white face as a canvas picture of despair. She gazed blankly

at her father for an instant and cried out: "Bury him—Richard! Bury him, my Richard! No, no, no, it cannot be! Father, father, don't let them do that—I must see him again. Father, oh, father, let me die, too, that I may join him!"

"It is not God's will that it should be so. It is His will that we shall live on until He calls

us home, my child-not as we will it."

"Oh, father, how can I bear this grief? How can I go through life without my Richard by my side—he whom I loved as woman never loved before? Richard, Richard, why did you leave me? Come back to me, Richard, come back to me!"

Her father saw that she was again becoming hysterical and forced her gently back upon the bed, smoothed her hair, gave her a mild draught of an opiate, and she fell into a heavy slumber. With folded arms he gazed long and earnestly at his daughter, then went to the cot and lay down.

But he could not sleep. He lay there about an hour, thinking of the events of the past few days—crowded so rapidly upon each other that it seemed to him that they had covered a much longer period of time. In the quiet of the night, the stillness broken only by the occasional roll of thunder, lying there, his thoughts drifted back

many years—back to the day when he had felicitated himself—yes, and I, too, had been felicitated—upon the arrival in the household of a daughter.

Then day by day, almost, her life passed in review before him. What a peaceful and happy life they had led—aye, peaceful and full of happiness and content. He thought of her as a child, as a schoolgirl, and then as blossoming into womanhood. He thought of her engagement to Richard and the joyousness with which those two had mapped out their future lives. He thought of the uncertainty of this life—how abrupt had been the ending of it all—how chaotic everything seemed to have become without an instant's warning—not only in that household, but also in another.

Then his mind reverted to the day Jim Carbon had appeared and had asked for employment. Heaven-sent, it seemed to him, had been the appearance of that young man on that day. He thought of the friends Jim had made; of all the good deeds he had done, quietly and without ostentation; of the affection that Mrs. Boosch and he himself had formed for him—almost motherly and fatherly. How he would be missed about the place, he thought.

What a sacrifice he had made, going away thus without a parting word to the legion of friends

who had honored and respected him and who would now speak in condemnation of him—who would be surprised—shocked—when the announcement would be made that he had clandestinely married Myra and had gone away and deserted her. What would they say to him when they spoke to him of Carbon's sudden disappearance? But that mattered not—he would refrain from giving any direct answer, save that he had gone suddenly, leaving them to draw their own inference as to whether he had left any word as to why or where he was going.

Finally he arose and went to the window, parted the curtains, and peered out at the inky darkness, illumined at intervals by the lightning flashes. He was tired, worn out, but as sleep would not come he would remain up. Turning, he glanced at Myra, now quiet under the influence of the soothing drug, then came down stairs and into the hall, where he looked up at me, as if he would commune with me, as was

his habit when we were alone, and said:

"Clock, these are troublous times, are they not? But we will weather them, won't we? And it will all come out right, won't it, Mr. Clock?"

To which I responded—what more could I say?—

"Yes, yes—yes, yes—yes, yes."

TICK THE SEVENTEENTH

JIM CARBON stood for one brief moment outside the door. He bethought himself of his storm-coat; he tried the door, but it was locked—the spring lock had shut him out. Should he knock and ask for it? No, he would rather brave the storm clad as he was than risk any danger of a reversion of his decision to leave at once upon the ending of the ceremony. But what a night to be out without protection against that pouring, driving rain!

The thought occurred to him that he might cut across the fields to "Bill" Couterre's barn. He knew that "Bill" kept his big raincoat and oilskin hat there—yes, and his rubber boots, too. There would be no harm in borrowing them. It was fully five miles to the station at East Stroudsburg, and the roads would be heavy with mud. He could leave them in a field somewhere near the Milford crossing—any one would know that they belonged to Couterre; it would at once be surmised that Carbon had left them there when he had "deserted." Yes, he would do it.

He started across the fields, making a detour

to avoid going through a clump of small underbrush in a field that had not been cleared. He stumbled many times, in that darkness, but kept on at a good swinging gait. He wished to get as far away as possible before the good farm folk thereabouts were stirring—away from the scenes where he had spent so many happy days. He knew he could, by a close margin, make the fast freight to New York, which left East Stroudsburg at 4.15 with one passenger car attached. He knew that by 5 o'clock he would be many miles away from all those friends so dear to him, from the good doctor and Mrs. Boosch, and from Myra—his wife.

How oddly that sounded to him. His wife! Ah, could he have won the love that had been Richard Broakley's, how sweet to his ears would have been those two words—but to him, now, how hollow they sounded. His wife!—aye, he had dreamed of some day winning a girl's love and calling her thus. But all was now ended—yes, ended, but in a worthy cause—to save a woman's honor—what better cause could there be? He would still love her—his wife—as he had these many days, unknown to her or to Richard—but a dead love it would be.

As Carbon was stumbling along over the fields, Mary Lash awoke from her troubled sleep.

She had not disrobed; she had been so weary that she had lain down fully dressed and had fallen asleep. She remembered what Carbon had said to her—that she would never see him again. She wondered why he wished to see the doctor alone in the hall when all others had retired. What a mystery it all was, anyway. She was nervous, trembling—was it from the storm, was it from the long strain of the vigil by Myra's door, or was it because Carbon was going away? She rubbed her eyes, bathed her face, and decided to go down stairs to the kitchen and make a cup of coffee.

Upon opening the door she was astonished to see a light in the hall below. She peered over and saw Dr. Boosch pacing up and down. She wondered what time it was—how long had she slept? Why was the doctor still down there in the hall? She would have to pass him in going down to the kitchen, but that would not matter; she would tell him that she was restless and wished to make some coffee. Perhaps he would like some, also. So she went softly down the stairs and startled the good doctor by her sudden appearance. He was so deep in thought that he had not heard her footsteps upon the stairs.

"Why, Mary," he exclaimed, "I thought you were in bed asleep. What are you doing up?"

"Yes," she replied, "I did sleep for a while, but I am nervous and don't feel well. I thought I would come down and make a cup of coffee. Would you like a cup, too?"

"Yes, Mary; I think it might do us both good."

"Shall I make some for Carbon, too? I heard him go out with the team, and maybe when he comes back he will need a cup—after being out in such a night as this."

She could not resist the temptation of letting the doctor know that she had heard Jim go out and drive by. He was astonished, but he

softly answered:

"No, Mary, you need not make any for Carbon. He has returned with the team."

"Has he gone to his room or is he in the kitchen?"

"No, he is not in his room—it is locked and must remain so, I know not for how long—perhaps for all time. Do not ask any questions, Mary. Jim Carbon has gone from this house, I think, forever."

"Gone?" gasped Mary; "gone? Dr. Boosch, you don't mean to say—you don't mean that

James Carbon, the man I loved, has—"

"What, Mary Lash, you loved him?" asked the doctor, both astonished and startled by the suddenness and candor of this confession—"you loved Jim Carbon?"

"Yes, Dr. Boosch, I am not ashamed to say it—I loved him—who could help loving him—and now he is gone!"

"Yes, Mary, as I said, you must not ask questions. Carbon will be many, many miles from

here before the sun sets to-night."

Mary Lash looked at Dr. Boosch reproachfully as if she blamed him for Carbon's going away. She met his kindly eyes, and saw that there was no anger there. Surely, they could not have quarreled—there must be some other reason. She burst into tears.

"There, there, Mary," said the doctor, "don't cry. Go ahead and make the coffee, and perhaps after that you will feel better."

Mary went into the kitchen and there saw Carbon's stormcoat hanging in its accustomed place by the door. That was sufficient evidence to her mind that he would return—surely he would not leave in this storm without it. He must be in the barn with the horses. She would go there. She would tell him that whatever his reason for going, he should change his mind, for there could be no good and valid cause, Mary was sure, why he should go.

She imagined that some fancied wrong had driven him to that resolve. She was certain that if she knew it she could argue with him

and convince him that it was imaginary—that no one would think of wilfully doing Jim Carbon an injury, here, there, or elsewhere. She threw his coat over her shoulders, put on a tam o' shanter that was hanging beside it, slipped on her rubbers, took a lantern, and started for the barn. She wondered afterward that she was not afraid, but there was no fear in her heart to-night. She would go to him, beg of him, plead with him, not to go, for the sake of all concerned—for her sake, if need be.

She went out to the barn—what a big, spacious barn it seemed to her that night, although she had been in it hundreds, yes, a thousand times before—and peered about, calling "Mr. Carbon, Mr. Carbon." But there was no response, save that given by the hollow echo thrown back from the roof and the weird moaning of the wind through the rafters. Every nook and cranny she searched, with the thought that perhaps it was his intention to wait until morning and that he had gone to sleep somewhere about the barn.

Into the hay loft, the granary, the workshop, the carriage room, everywhere she went, but no sign of Carbon. She was becoming disheartened—she feared that perhaps, after all, he had gone. She would, however, go to his room. Mayhap he had, unbeknown to the doctor,

returned and had gone there to pack up his belongings. So, with heavy heart she returned to the house, and the doctor having stepped up for a moment to satisfy himself that all was well in Myra's room before he took his coffee, she crept softly up the stairs to Carbon's room and gently tapped on the door. No response came. She tried the door—it was locked.

She leaned her head against the door and bitterly cried to herself: "Jim, Jim, why did you go? Why did you not stay and learn to love me? I would have been a good and loving wife to you, Jim Carbon—yes, a good and loving wife!"

Strange it seemed to me, the old family clock, hearing Mary's soliloquy, that one heart in that house should be crying out for him, while another had anxiously inquired whether he had gone and had breathed such a sigh of relief when informed that he had.

Strange it seemed to me, I say, that Jim Carbon should yearn for a love that he knew was another's, while Mary Lash was yearning for Carbon's love—unknown to him. But who can divine the cause for the misdirected and badly aimed darts of Cupid at times?—surely not I, only a clock.

She heard the doctor moving about in the

room and hurriedly went down stairs and poured out his coffee, and, with a roll and butter, put the tray on the dining-room table.

Jim Carbon, stumbling on, was utterly oblivious of the fact that any person in the world was giving him a thought at this time of the night. He was approaching Couterre's barn. The storm seemed to have lashed itself into a fury, as if it would beat itself out from sheer anger. floodgates of heaven seemed to have been opened to their widest. Nothing to guide him but the electric display furnished by the elements, he stumbled up to the barn, groped his way about until he found the door, and then, at a particularly sharp flash of lightning, walked into the barn.

He thought he knew where "Bill" kept his lantern, but it was not there. However, Jim had been in that barn many times, and with the few matches that he had, he managed to find Couterre's storm outfit. Sure enough, it was there, under the old double-barreled gun that he kept there, always ready cocked and loaded, in the event of the sudden appearance of a wildcat or even a bear, for bears had wandered down the side of Brushy Mountain in those days. Jim pulled out his last match, lit it, took down the coat and hat, and as the light went out, put on the things

Turning around, he felt his way along and stumbled over a can of kerosene, upsetting it and spilling its contents over the floor—he could tell that by the odor. He kept on groping along the bins, the barrels, and boxes, and finally reached the door. During the glare of a flash he thought—he was positive, in fact—that he saw a woman's figure, clad in white, standing at the window of Couterre's house, and alongside of her was the figure of a child, also in white.

Jim stepped outside of the building, and as he did so a brilliant, vicious flash lit up the turbulent heavens, a crash that sounded as if the very mountains about were rent asunder followed. and for an instant Carbon was stunned as the bolt struck only a few feet behind him—the

spot he had just left.

Coincident with the awful crash of that bolt there was a report as of a gun discharged and the piercing scream of a woman's voice—so piercing that it appeared to rise above the now

reverberating roll.

With a start at the narrowness of his escape and the sound of that ear-piercing scream, Jim Carbon hesitated for a moment and then commenced his journey to East Stroudsburg.

As he swung out into the main road he turned around and saw that Couterre's barn was ablaze.

TICK THE EIGHTEENTH

In the days of the pioneer work round about that part of Pennsylvania there had appeared one Henry Couterre. He was a Frenchman—excitable, irritable, and morose. He hewed close to the line, asked no favors of any of the other pioneers on the farms that were opening up, kept to himself, and raised a family of seven children—all boys—one of whom was William—"Bill."

They brought up their children rightly, did Henry Couterre and his wife, and none could gainsay that they were hardworking, industrious, honest folk, striving to make a home for themselves thousands of miles from the land that bore their flag. They had come to this country—this land of the free—dreaming of the opportunities for wealth that the broad acres waiting for the brawn to till them afforded the immigrants.

They had worked hard—early and late—had Henry Couterre and his good wife, living first in a loghouse—only two rooms there were, then, but they were snug and warm in the hard winter months. And, gradually, as field after field was opened up, and the trips to the mill

with the harvest grain became more frequent, there were additions to the loghouse, as there were additions to the family of those two worthy persons. And so, by industry and dint of hard work, the couple, who came to this country looking forward as the pilgrims looked to the land of promise, prospered and saw their children grow up, one by one, take up their burden, and become useful and worthy citizens of the State of Pennsylvania—the Keystone State, each rugged, honest pioneer of which was only a small particle of the stone, but without which that stone should never have been. Keystone—ah, how much that word conveys! Keystone, without which the arches of life would crumble and fall.

Build ye up, and up, and up, and arch around. And then—what is there to hold together, to keep from crumbling, a mass of wreckage—were it not for the keystone?

Sturdy chaps were these sons—Charles, the first; Edward, the second; John, the third; Benjamin, the fourth; Hiram, the fifth; Louis, the sixth—

And the seventh son was William Couterre the keystone. The father had looked upon him as many a father looks upon his last-born—with patience, forbearance, and forgiveness for his transgressions. It seemed to him that he had

upbuilded the arch—three upon each side—and William was the keystone.

And so, when Henry Couterre and his wife had been laid away, these many years agone,

they had left a goodly heritage in progeny.

William—everybody in Monroe County knew him as "Bill"—was a hardworking, industrious man, as his father had been before him. He was saving and prudent in everything save the use of liquor. For long periods he would abstain entirely, but at intervals when he went to town with a load of railroad ties or with an overplus of eggs and butter that his wife did not need for his large family, he invariably took a goodly portion out in trade at the town hotel.

When in his sober state he was a quiet, peaceful man, going about his work from day to day without scarcely speaking to his wife and children. This would last for weeks and weeks at a time. Then he would get a notion into his head that he wanted to go to town. His wife, a frail little woman, had often tried to dissuade him, but had found it useless. She knew full well that his desire for liquor prompted the journey. She knew. also, that when he came home he would continue drinking until he became abusive to her and the children, who wisely kept out of his way when he was in one of his tantrums.

She was not afraid of him, powerful man though he was—for he had never attempted to do any one bodily harm. But she knew that there would be a war of words that would culminate in his going away and remaining away for several days, to return and peacefully resume his work about the farm. This had been repeated so often that his wife had become accustomed to it, and she eventually had given up her pleadings and let him go without a protest.

Two days before Carbon had borrowed his things "Bill" had notified his wife that he wanted her to pack up a lot of eggs and as many pounds of butter as she could possibly spare. She was well aware of what the meaning of this command was. She thought she would make a mild appeal

to him, just this once.

"I'm a-going to town, Martha," he said.
"I need a new pair of boots and I reckon I had better bring along a couple of shirts. I don't think I need anything more, do I? What'll

I bring for you?"

"Nothing, William. I was down to town last week, you know, and bought all I will need for some time. Don't be long, William, and don't tarry too long at the inn. If you must drink, William, bring something home with you and drink it here, where you will be out of harm's way."

Couterre did not like to be chided about his drinking. He knew his weakness—knew that when he went to town he would fall by the way-side. Often and often had he promised his wife, as he drove off, that he would not touch a drop—and as often had he failed in his promise.

So it was, when he returned from his trip he was very much under the influence—ugly, aggressive, seeking opportunity for an outlet for his

quarrelsome disposition when in his cups.

On his way home Couterre had met Silas Creeker, for whom he had a hatred that did not come to the surface except on such occasions when liquor excited his passion. They had had hot, angry words on the road, but did not come to blows, inasmuch as Silas, who was far superior to Couterre in physical strength and who never indulged in liquor himself, was too level-headed to come into combat with a man who plainly was under the influence. He, however, could not take the taunts and slings that "Bill" had thrown at him without retaliating in kind.

All of which did not tend to mollify the latter, and when they finally parted with a particularly strong fusillade of abuse, it is needless to say that Couterre was in no amiable mood. He staggered on until he reached his home, and then began a repetition of what his wife had gone through

many, many times. It was always his custom, on these periodical trips, to bring home a sufficient quantity of liquor to tide him over several days, and this time he had not failed to do so. He pulled out bottles from almost every pocket, and put them in various hiding places about the barn—not that he was afraid of their being taken away from him, but in his half-maudlin way there was a sense of apology about his action—he seemed to be ashamed of himself, and did not like others to know that he was still imbibing, for in his sober senses he had an aversion to liquor and to any one under its influence.

Many, many trips he made, back and forth from the house to the barn, and each time that he returned he became more excited and maddened. He wanted some one to quarrel with to give vent to the fancied wrongs that were conjured up in his muddled brain, but every one kept out of his way. His children—five of them there were —feared him, not so much that he would do them harm, but abuse and unkind words from a parent to a child are harder to bear, sometimes, than physical pain. But no matter what his condition, whether intoxicated or sober, there was one to whom he never said an unkind word, and that was his eldest daughter, Alice.

For her he seemed to have an overweening

fondness that no amount of liquor could deaden. So it was, whenever there was a family storm brewing, she was always by her mother's side, knowing that she could in a measure pacify him. And on the day that Carbon had visited the barn she had remained close by her mother's side, for she knew full well that the time was at hand when the usual quarrel would take place between her mother and father—she could pacify, but she could not prevent. Often and often had she witnessed these quarrels before, and each time she had hoped and prayed that it would be the last. She was now fifteen years of age, and her love for her father, although she was wearying of these scenes, was as great as that for her mother.

All day he had roamed about the farm, finding fault with this and with that, grumbling and gesticulating to the silent trees in the orchard, then making another trip to the barn. This course he continued until sundown, when he entered the house.

The family was seated at the supper-table when he entered. He staggered into the room, glaring at his son Tom. What Tom had done to warrant his displeasure no one knew, not even Couterre himself, probably.

Without a word of warning he went over to Tom and gave him a stinging box on the ear.

Tom was the oldest boy, eighteen years of age, and performed all the heavy work about the place when his father was on one of his sprees. He was a good-natured boy, was Tom, and had often borne these blows before, but this time he resented it. He gave his father a shove that sent him reeling toward the door. This only added fuel to the fire that was raging in Couterre's brain, and with an oath he sprang at Tom, who

warily dodged him and left the room.

Then "Bill" turned upon his wife, accusing her of having urged the boy to turn against his father, charging her with having encouraged his children to become disrespectful to him, and finally became so abusive that she could stand it no longer, but left the room and started to go upstairs. He staggered after her, followed by his daughter Alice who begged him to be good to her mother, but her pleadings fell upon deaf He continued his reviling up to their room, where he eventually burst into such a passion that he fairly shook the house with his wild ravings, and then, after throwing chairs around and smashing several things, he stumbled down the stairs and out into the barn. while he came out, and for the remainder of the evening they saw no more of him.

In the meantime the storm had come up,

and Mrs. Couterre, who loved her husband notwithstanding his one great fault, was considerably concerned about him and ordered Tom to go out into the barn and see if he was there. Tom did so and returned with the information that he had been all through the barn, the carriage shed, and even to the neighbors, but none had seen him. The horses were all in the stable, so he could not have gone any other way than by foot.

Mrs. Couterre, worried about his absence throughout the night, watching at the window at the storm which he must be out in, was sure that she saw him stumbling around the barn long after midnight. She awakened Alice, and there at the window those two stood watching for the appearance of the husband and father. Finally, after not many minutes, they thought they saw the form of Couterre emerging from the door. As a flash of lightning illumined the surroundings Alice exclaimed:

"Why, yes, there is papa. Didn't you see him? He had on his stormcoat and his oilskin hat. I could see that."

They remained by the window an instant longer. All was darkness again.

As Alice stepped away there was a blinding flash, followed by a fearful crash. Simultaneously

with that crash there came an agonizing scream from her mother.

Mrs. Couterre, riddled with shot, fell dead at her daughter's feet.

TICK THE NINETEENTH

CARBON, keeping steadily on his way, plowing through deep mud and pools of water, looked back now and then and saw the glare reflected in the dark heavens as the flames consumed Couterre's barn. He plodded on and on, often wondering what time it was. The last crash and flash seemed to have been the culmination of that awful storm, the like of which old settlers had rarely seen. It had spent its fury, evidently, in that last vicious snap. The distant rumbling denoted that it was making itself known and felt in other parts.

Little by little the rifts began to show in the clouds, and as Carbon plodded along in his solitary walk he wished that day would dawn. He knew that it could not be very long, as faint streaks in the breaks of the swiftly moving clouds made evident that fact. He figured out that he would be able to make East Stroudsburg in time for the 4.15 train, but he would have to swing along at a lively gait—almost impossible under the condition of the roads. Steadily he kept on, however, and as gradually it became light and he

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could partially see his way he increased his pace. Five miles makes a fairly good walk under ordinary circumstances, but when it is taken into consideration that Carbon was compelled at times to draw one foot after another from the deep mud, no wonder that he was becoming weary, particularly as he had had so little sleep in the past few days.

Finally the breaking of the dawn was sufficiently advanced to enable him to see the face of his watch. He was near the Milford crossing, and the time was exactly four o'clock. This would allow him only fifteen minutes, and it would necessitate his moving pretty rapidly in order to get to the station in time. He went over to a fencepost, pulled off Couterre's coat and hat, put on his own soft hat which he had kept under the coat, and laid them beside the post. lightened of the heavy coat, he was enabled to increase the pace at which he was going, as he struck the sidewalks of the town. He looked back over the hills toward Marshall's Creek and saw the smoke from what he knew were the ruins of "Bill's" barn slowly ascending and drifting away in a stretch along the skyline of hills and mountains.

As Jim neared the station he saw a familiar figure stumbling along. Could it be?—yes, it

was Couterre himself-wet, bedraggled, and drunk. Jim thought to speak to him and tell him that his barn had burned down, that he had borrowed his storm outfit, and where he could find it. Plainly "Bill" had been drinking all night and Jim was aware that if he went over to speak to him it would mean missing that train. He did not want to miss it—he must catch it. Let Couterre find out for himself. It was of vastly greater importance to Jim to get away before the townsfolk were astir than that he should endeavor to make himself understood by "Bill." No, he would go on, and go on he did.

The rays of the rising summer sun were just beginning to peep above the horizon, burnishing up the fields and woods that had been freshened by the torrents of the night, when Carbon heard the distant whistle of the train. He knew, then, that he could make it easily. He slackened his pace for a moment, that he might take a last view of the country that he had so often traversed

in the past four years.

There, in front of him, stood the Kittatinny Mountain, towering some fourteen hundred feet above the sea-level, through which flowed the Delaware River,—the Delaware Water Gap. Turning around and facing away from the Kittatinny, he saw in the distance dear old Pocono,

over which he and Richard Broakley had both often traveled together, dreaming of locating some fortune-producing mineral—yes, and perhaps both dreaming of Myra at the same time.

Only for a fraction of a minute did he gaze around at the familiar landscape; then started toward the station, a short distance away. Arrived there he went to the ticket office and was greeted by the agent, who knew him by sight, but not by name.

"Ticket to New York," he said to the clerk, who acted as ticket seller, telegraph operator, freight agent, and train dispatcher at night, in addition to various other duties.

"Not coming back?" he asked of Carbon. Not that he cared one whit, but it would have seemed impolite to him had he not asked some question. "Must have been called away sudden like, eh?"

"Yes," answered Carbon. He did not know the man beyond having seen him around the station at times, and consequently did not think it was necessary for him to enlighten him very much as to his movements.

He stepped out on the platform as the headlights of the approaching train swung around the curve at Milford crossing, shimmering in the pale dawn of the morning. How cool and

refreshing it was to stand there, with the rarefied air, cooled by the storm of the night, giving him relief from the warmth of that hard walk with Couterre's heavy coat on! Then the train rolled in and Jim swung up on the step of the rear car—the only passenger car.

This car was a combination smoker and passenger, and as Jim entered he glanced about at the sleeping passengers. In one corner was a man snoring hard enough to offset the chug-chug of the engine as it seemed to be gathering fresh breath after the stiff pull over Pocono. In another corner was a colored man, head drooped back, mouth wide open, trying to send back to the other corner a discordant refrain.

Near the centre of the car was a couple also sleeping. They were evidently a fly-by-night theatrical team, for their dressing suit case bore the legend, "The Nelsons—Comedy Two." Besides these, Carbon was the only other passenger. He sat down—what a relief that was after the long tramp of the night!—and as the engine tooted and started toward the turn around Forge Cut he got his last glimpse at Monroe County.

What a beautiful morning that was! As the train wound its tortuous way along the Delaware River, how fresh and sweet and fragrant everything seemed. Carbon, seated by the open

window, wondered if the future of those he had just left behind would be like unto that morning—peaceful and full of sunshine, after the storm. Nature was awakening from that turbulent night, refreshed and beauteous, as if it would show by comparison how much better our lives would be if we would dispel the storms and have only sunshine.

And as the train sped on, the smoke from the farmhouse chimneys, leisurely curling upward in the calm of the morn, gave evidence of the awakening, also, of humanity. Here and there the train rushed by a little village, the inhabitants of which were beginning to show signs of activity born of the day. The cows were being led to pasture by the barefooted boy; here was a team being harnessed to the plow; there was a man harrowing, thus early in the morning; and, again, the village baker was driving along the heavy road delivering the staff of life to those who had tilled the soil that the grain therefor might grow.

The big, round, red sun was beaming down upon all alike—upon the poor farmer, upon the prosperous one; upon the humble helper and the owner of many acres; upon the milkmaid and the mistress; upon the good and the bad.

As the train neared Washington, in the State of New Jersey, Carbon began to feel slight pangs

of hunger. He remembered, now, that he had not eaten since yesterday noon. He inquired of the conductor as to where the first stop would be made, to which he received reply that "she whoops right through." A healthy appetite was Carbon's, and when the colored man woke up and fished from a cardboard box a goodly layout, Carbon envied him. As if he divined that his neighbor in front of him was in need of rations, the colored man leaned over and said:

"Boss, ef yo' don' min' I wud jes' laik toe ast yo' toe jine muh. Ah hasn't ben used toe chawin' ob muh grub by muhself, an' it'd seemer kinder good toe hab some un bitin' in wid me."

"You are very kind, indeed," said Jim, who could not refrain from casting furtive glances at the spread the colored man had in front of

him, "but I would not like to rob you."

"Rob! Rob nuthin'! My ole woman she thinks Ah'm ah ho'se—two ho'ses—an' puts up uh feed that'd keep sum folks foh er munt'. Rob? Why, boss, jes a-look heah. Does yo' t'ink vo' wud be a-robbin' er coon as has all this fuh toe git away fum yer toe New York?"

"Well, I must say," replied Carbon, "your missus has certainly treated you well as far as quantity goes-and I dare say in quality as well."

He turned around and glanced into the box.

First, there were ham sandwiches—ham such as only a "mammy" can cook—neatly done up in a white napkin; then there were hard-boiled eggs, shining as if she had spent hours polishing them up for her lord and master; then there was a jar of quince jelly; then a jar of tiny pickles, the color of the greensward in springtime; then a piece of pumpkin pie, which in itself would almost make a meal for a man; and, to top it all off, a slice of raisin cake as big as Carbon's two fists put together.

"No," said Carbon, after he had completed the survey, "I do not think my conscience would trouble me if I did take a little, for there certainly

is enough to go around."

"Sho' as yo' is bohn, mistuh. Pitch in an' do

yo' bestus."

"Thanks." And Jim turned his seat around facing his colored friend, and thus they ate and talked until Paterson was reached, when the colored man said he would like to have a pull at his old corncob and went into the smoking compartment to finish his journey in company with his pipe.

Carbon, left to himself, began to ruminate upon his future movements. He planned that he would go out to some western state and secure work upon a farm, as he had when he applied to Dr. Boosch. First he would go to Egg Harbor



City, settle his affairs, draw his money, and from there he would go at once to Chicago. He had this all settled in his mind, and seemed selfsatisfied with his arrangement. He settled back in his seat, picked up a New York newspaper of the previous day that some one had left in the car and casually glanced over the news. was nothing startling. Then his eye wandered over the big advertisements, offering alluring inducements to the feminine world; then his eye fell upon the "Personal" column, with its mass of wants, and heirs sought, and whereabouts of missing persons desired, and what not. ran his eye down the column, when suddenly his attention was attracted to an advertisement which caused him to read it more than once. Then he read it aloud to himself, to be sure that he was reading aright:

"Wanted—A young man accustomed to hard and rough work, to join advertiser in prospecting tour in Nevada; will leave at once; must have \$500 and big muscles and lots of grit, otherwise don't bother me. Call or address Clinton Eilen, Room 16B, Astor House, New York City."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Carbon, "the very thing. I will go to see him as soon as I get to New York. But what name will I give? Let me see—James Carbon. I don't want to lose sight of my name

entirely. James—Ames—Amos—yes, that will do. And Carbon—Arbon—Boncar—no that won't do. Barcon—that's it! Amos Barcon! I certainly couldn't forget that. Yes, henceforth I am Amos Barcon to all the world—to every one I meet. Good-bye, James Carbon! How do you do, Amos Barcon?"

And it was thus that from the chrysalis of James Carbon emerged Amos Barcon.

TICK THE TWENTIETH

As the train bearing Carbon was speeding on toward Hoboken, Couterre was staggering on his way home. He was a pitiable-looking object. With his clothes wet through, bloodshot eyes, stubbly growth of beard, shaking like a leaf, he was the picture of misery and remorse. He had about reached the end of his spree and had sobered up a little—sufficient to feel the depression that overcomes those who stimulate themselves for days and then suddenly stop. He had made up his mind that he would not drink another drop, as he stumbled along with uncertain step.

He had a good long walk before him, and that would straighten him out a little, he thought, before he saw his wife and children. He felt mean, in all that the word implies—mean in that he had made an exhibition of himself, while under the influence of liquor, before his children; mean in that he had struck his son Tom, who was the best of sons, faithful to him and to his work; mean in that he had reviled his good wife in the presence of his daughter Alice. Yes, he would

give up drink forever. He reached into his pocket, drew forth a bottle, looked at it as if it were tempting him, and then impetuously smashed it on a stone in the road.

He wondered how he had drifted to town that night. It was all a blank to him—the past night—and as he realized his condition he felt that he would give half his farm if he could recall the days in his life when all had been dark and dense owing to the effect of the liquor on his brain. However, he would do better in the future—he and liquor would part company for the remainder of his life.

He staggered from one side of the road to the other until he reached the spot where Carbon had put his stormcoat and hat. He looked at them with astonishment, picked them up, and with a half-sober, half-drunken exclamation, said to himself:

"Bill, how in the world did you ever come to leave these things here? I don't remember having put these on when I left the house. Better quit, old man, better quit."

It was a veritable mystery to him, and only added to his determination to free himself from any further chances of again falling into the clutches of strong drink. He retraced his steps and went directly to Squire Townsend's house.

It was early yet and the squire had not arisen. He waited at the door until he came down, when he informed him that he wanted to swear off

for good and for all.

Little did he dream, then, that within a few hours he would again be in the squire's office. Squire Townsend, who had known Couterre since childhood, was more than pleased at his good resolution and drew up an affidavit, as strong as he could make it, and with his hand upraised Couterre swore in the presence of the Almighty that he would never again allow a drop of liquor of any

kind to pass his lips.

This done, and having drunk a deep draught of water to cool his burning throat, "Bill" left the squire's office feeling stronger, morally, than he had ever felt before in his life. He continued his journey home with a better and lighter feeling. Hereafter he would not again have to suffer as he had—the mental torture, the loss of self-respect, the uncertainty of what his actions had been during the period that liquor had made his mind a blank, the shattering of his nerves. He would enter into a new life; he would win back the respect of his wife, of his children. How different the future appeared now to him from what it had been before he had made his firm resolution.

It was now full day, and glancing over toward the mountain side where was his home, he saw a faint streak of smoke—like a light, fleeting cloud it appeared to him—stretching away to the northward. He continued on his way, going across fields whenever he came near a farmhouse, as he did not wish to meet any one. He had donned the heavy stormcoat that Carbon had discarded and in his hand he carried the hat. Finally, as the sun's rays became warm and strong, he spread out his coat and lay down on the side of a hill in order to dry out his clothes. It was thus that he fell asleep, utterly oblivious of the stirring events that had taken place at his home since he had left it the night before.

That fearful scream emitted by Mrs. Couterre as she fell dead at her daughter's feet aroused all her children, who came rushing into her room. Alice lay on the floor beside her mother. She had swooned. Tom was the first one to arrive, and saw at a glance that his mother had been shot. He did not, however, know that she was dead. He lifted the form of his mother upon the bed and went over to Alice, poured some water on her temples, chafed her hands, and finally brought her to consciousness.

"Great heavens, Alice, what has happened?" he asked, as she opened her eyes.

Alice stared at him for a moment and then said: "Happened—happened? Oh, yes, now I remember. I am in her room, am I not? Where is mother?"

"Mother is lying on her bed. I have sent Willie over to Dr. Boosch's house to ask him to come at once. Now tell me, Alice, what has happened. Speak quick, for mother needs our care."

"Why, Tom, mother and I were standing at the window watching for papa. By the light-ning's glare we saw him come out of the barn, and an instant later there was a crash and I thought I heard a gun go off at the same time—and mother screamed and fell to the floor, and I guess I did, too, didn't I, Tom?"

With this Alice recovered and sprang to her feet and to her mother's side.

"Mother mother," she cried, "speak to me!

Speak to me!"

She threw her arms about her neck, passionately kissed her a dozen times, and burst into tears. She did not know, then, that those lips were sealed forever.

As Couterre's children stood around the bedside waiting for Dr. Boosch, his son William was running across the fields as fast as his legs would let him. He was thirteen years of age, but was

tall and angular, and there were few who could beat him at running. With the thought that his mother's life was at stake as an incentive, the ground fairly flew under his feet. In an almost incredible space of time he was knocking at the door of Dr. Boosch's homestead. It was still dark and it was some time before Mary Lash came down to inquire who was there at the door.

"It's me," William said.

"Yes, but who is 'me'?" asked Mary, peering

out at the figure at the door.

"Why, it's me—Willie Couterre. We want the doctor to come over right away. Mother has been shot."

"Shot!" exclaimed Mary. "In mercy's name,

what is going to happen next?"

She darted up the stairs as she had when Carbon brought Broakley's body home, and aroused the doctor. He was fully dressed, as he had only lain down for a few minutes on the

cot by Myra's side.

Mary informed him of what William had said. Dr. Boosch snatched up his professional handbag, ever ready for service, gave a hasty glance at his daughter, who was still under the influence of the opiate he had given her, bade Mary remain by her side during his absence, and hurried down stairs and joined the lad. He could not keep

pace with him, but told him to go ahead and tell the folks to start a fire and have plenty of hot water as that would probably be the first thing he would need, along with some clean, white

linen for bandages.

When Dr. Boosch arrived at Couterre's house he was ushered up stairs by Tom. The children were all gathered around their mother's bed, vainly pleading with her to speak to them, to open her eyes, to tell them what to do. They were absolutely helpless. Where was their father in this time of need, they asked each other. The good doctor, who was almost unnerved by the awful calamities that had multiplied within a few days, brushed aside the weeping children and bent over Mrs. Couterre.

It required but a cursory glance to convince him that his services as a physician were not needed. He glanced around at the array of eyes waiting for his verdict. His heart sank; he choked back a sob; his own sorrows had made a child of him, too, and his strongly emotional nature showed plainly as he turned his face away from those gathered there, and wept.

"My dear children," he said, when he could

command his voice, "you are motherless."

Motherless! Ye, who know not what that meant to that little band of children, weep for

them. Weep for them-for the aching hearts, the void in their lives, the hollowness of the sound as they instinctively cry out "Mamma" in their time of trouble. To be fatherless means to be without the breadwinner—to struggle along battling against grim want; to be motherless means to be without that maternal love to which we cling in all our sins, our sorrows—our shelter in the time of storm. When in your childhood you fell and bruised yourself, or cut your fingers, or had any childish sorrow-to whom did you cry out for relief? Mother! "Mamma, I hurt myself; I fell down stairs," you cried, and who took you up and folded you to her breast and kissed away the tears and brought back the sunshine to your eyes and started you off anew to your romping and your play? Mother!

"But how did it all happen? Where is your father?" Dr. Boosch inquired of Tom and Alice,

when they had calmed somewhat.

Tom then gave him a detailed account of what had taken place from the moment that his father had made up his mind that he would make a trip to town. He told of how his father had returned intoxicated, of how he had kept up his drinking, of how he had struck his son, of how he had quarreled with his wife, and of what Alice had told him occurred in her mother's room.

"I don't know where father is now," Tom concluded; "no one has seen him since mother and Alice saw him coming out of the barn."

"Was your father in a rage when he left the

house?" the doctor asked of Alice.

"Yes," she replied, "he was real angry. He threatened to end it all some day—but, then, he was not himself, you know, Doctor."

Dr. Boosch was thoughtful for some time.

Then he turned to Tom.

"Tom, you must go for Mr. Brickett, the undertaker. And on your way stop and tell Sheriff Barre that I wish to see him at once at my house. Better go on horseback, Tom, so that you can return as soon as possible. You are the oldest, and will have to look after matters for a while. And you, children, I want you to come over to my house and stay there to-day. I must go back, for Myra is not well, you know, and I must be with her. Come, children, get your clothes on and come with me. You must not stay here."

While the children were getting dressed Dr. Boosch pulled the sheet over the body of Mrs. Couterre, locked the door of the room and handed the key to Tom, who had already slipped on his

clothes and was ready to go.

By this time it was daylight, and with Alice

and the three smaller children Dr. Boosch returned to his home. He called Mary Lash and told her to get some breakfast for them. When Mary heard that Mrs. Couterre was dead she affectionately kissed each one and consoled them as much as lay in her power.

In a short while Sheriff Barre arrived, and immediately Dr. Boosch took him into his private office. He excused himself for a moment while he called his wife to ask her to stay with Myra. They were closeted for a long while—more than an hour it was. Finally the sheriff emerged from the room, went to the barn, hitched up the doctor's horse, and drove at breakneck speed down the road.

Sheriff Barre continued on until he reached Squire Townsend's office. He had a long talk with him, received some document from him that was drawn out while he waited, and went to a hotel for a bite to eat. That ended, he again got into the doctor's rig and drove to Couterre's house. As he was driving up to the door he saw "Bill" coming across the fields with the storm-coat on his arm and his oilskin cap in his hand. He had taken a nap and had almost completely sobered up, but his mind was still extremely hazy as to the past twenty-four hours.

He was astonished, as he came up, to see

Undertaker Brickett's wagon standing by the door. And there was what had been his barn—now a mass of burned and charred timber. And there was Dr. Boosch's rig, with Sheriff Barre in it. What did it all mean? What had happened? Was the liquor still in his brain, making him see imaginary things? No, there they all were, in front of him as he came up close to the house.

He stepped up to the sheriff and said:

"How do you do, Mr. Barre. What brings you here? When did my barn burn down? What has happened? What does it all mean?"

These questions came rapidly to the stolid-

visaged sheriff, who said:

"I guess you know well enough what has happened, William Couterre. And let me tell you right now that I have a warrant in my pocket for you."

"A warrant? For me?"

"Yes, for you, William Couterre."

"And what have I done, pray, outside of getting drunk?"

"The warrant calls for your arrest for-"

He hesitated a moment. He did not like to be too blunt. He wanted to see what effect it would have on Couterre.

"Well, out with it, Sheriff. What is it?" demanded Couterre, who was trying to conjure

up in his mind what overt act he could have committed while in a state of frenzy under the influence of liquor.

"You are arrested, William Couterre," dramatically said the sheriff, "for the deliberate murder of your wife, Louisa Couterre!"

TICK THE TWENTY-FIRST

My, my, how events had crowded together those few days! How peaceful and happy all had been but a few days before! And now—

Richard Broakley dead; Myra suffering from shock and grief and married to Jim Carbon; Mary Lash broken-hearted; Jim Carbon gone away; Mrs. Couterre shot to death; William Couterre in jail, charged with the murder of his wife; the good doctor and Mrs. Boosch and Mr. and Mrs. Broakley griefstricken.

Surely fate had made ravages in that community

in a very short time.

This was the day for the burial of Richard Broakley. At noon carriages and vehicles of all kinds were already being prepared to take their owners to the Broakley home. Mr. Maujer, having slept peacefully throughout the early morning and until late in the day, was astounded to find that it was nine o'clock when he awakened. He hastily dressed and came down stairs just as Sheriff Barre drove off.

"Good morning, Doctor," he greeted. "And how did you rest last night?"

"Good morning, David. Rest? Why, I have not been to bed at all. Matters are becoming still more complicated. Mrs. Couterre was shot and killed last night. Sheriff Barre has just gone for a warrant for her husband, charging him with having killed her."

"What! William Couterre murdered his wife? You don't mean to say, do you, Doctor, that you

believe that that is true?"

"I am sorry to say, David, that I do believe that it is so. He had quarreled with her, left in a passion, vowing that he would some day end it all, was seen by his wife and daughter coming out of the barn, and immediately thereafter his wife was riddled with bullets from a shotgun. Couterre then set fire to his barn, evidently, in his drunken frenzy, and wandered off."

"Has he been seen since?"

"I believe not—that is, as far as I know. The

sheriff is undoubtedly looking for him now."

"Doctor," said the minister, "I can hardly realize it. Outside of his drinking habits Couterre was a good man. It seems incomprehensible to me that he could commit murder."

"Yes, Couterre was a hard-working man, good to his family, and had no other great fault than his periodical craving for liquor. I could

scarcely reconcile myself to the fact, either, were it not that all the indications are so palpable. He was undoubtedly liquor-crazed at the time, but that does not lessen his responsibility for his act in the eyes of the law."

"I shall go over and see his children, and see

what I can do for them," said Mr. Maujer.

"His children are here. I brought them with me. I would not think of allowing them to stay in the house alone with their dead mother."

"May the Lord have mercy on him for desolating his home and his children. A good woman was Mrs. Couterre—a good woman. I know she bore his weakness with Christian fortitude. And how is Myra this morning?"

"She appears to have improved somewhat. I shall be glad when this day is over. I am very much concerned lest the tolling of the church bell down at the Corner bring about a reaction."

"Well, she must be patient and bear up. I will go and see her after breakfast and have a short prayer with her and advise her to put her trust and hope in God."

"It will do her good, David, I am sure. Come, breakfast is ready. Mrs. Boosch will join us in a moment."

They sat down, and when the doctor's wife came in, the minister said grace and they discussed

the various turns that affairs had taken. There certainly was food for conversation and reflection in the doings of the past few days, and when they had finished the meal all three went up to Myra's room.

"Good morning, Myra," said Mr. Maujer, cheerfully. "And how are we this morning, eh?"

"Good morning, Mr. Maujer; good morning, papa and mamma. What a beautiful morning it is," she said, glancing over at the curtained window, through which the sun was beaming, casting its rays upon the case of butterflies which she and Richard had gathered in their happy rambles about the country-side.

"Yes, it is a lovely morning," said her father.
"But what a storm that was last night. I thought

at times that the house was fairly rocking."

"May I sit up to-day, father?" inquired Myra.
"Yes, for a while this afternoon, if you will

promise to be good."

"I will be good, father," she said, with a faint, sad smile upon her lips. "They are going to—to—bury Richard to-day?"

"Yes, my child," broke in the minister. "He will go to his last resting.place. It is the will

of God. Let us pray."

The prayer was short, but full of spiritual consolation for those whom Richard had left

behind. It taught Myra that she must bear her sorrow as He had borne His; that she should remember that we all must some day be gathered to our fathers and ourselves leave others behind to mourn for us; that she must look forward to the future with the thought that the man she loved was with her in spirit, if not in body.

After the prayer Myra seemed to have brightened up, although the tears were silently stealing down

her cheeks.

"Father," she said, turning to him, "I will be brave; I will be strong. My heart is heavy, father, but I will bear up in my faith that we will

meet again some day."

"Well said, my child—well said," Dr. Boosch replied, stooping over and kissing his daughter. "You have much to bear, yet, before all will be sunshine again, but it will lie with yourself how soon that time will come. Now, mother," he said, turning to his wife, "I wish you would stay with Myra for a little while, I want to take a bit of exercise with David. I have been so accustomed to my walk after breakfast that I would feel like an old man if I should miss it."

Dr. Boosch and Mr. Maujer walked along leisurely in the cool of that summer morning. Fast friends were they, and much they had to talk about whenever they met. Both were godly

men and had much in common in the interests of the church. They talked of church matters for a while and then the conversation drifted to Richard Broakley.

"What a pity that so young and healthy a man should be taken away so suddenly," said the minister. "What a blow to his parents. I feel so deeply for them that I am afraid I will

break down during the services."

"Yes," replied the doctor, "they will feel their loss for many years to come. I shall go over to see them often with Mrs. Boosch and give them what comfort I can. They will surely need it."

"My, what changes there have been since his death—and only a few hours ago, too. It seems that everything has gone wrong since then. I wonder where Carbon went to, and if he is still determined to go far away. What a good man he was, Doctor—such men are not often met with in a day's walk."

"No, they are not, David. He will get his reward some day, I am sure. Success cannot fail to come to one who is so honest, so good,

so kind, so-what more can I say?"

"I shall often think of those verses in the Bible which he marked and shall use them for my text in my sermon next Sunday."

By this time they had come within a short distance of Couterre's house.

"Shall we go and see if the undertaker has arrived?" asked the doctor.

"As you wish," replied Mr. Maujer.

They walked on until they came within sight of the house. They saw Brickett's wagon stand-

ing by the door.

"Yes, he has arrived," Dr. Boosch said. "We will go in and see him and Tom. Maybe they know what has become of Couterre. Strange how he should have become so frenzied as to commit that awful deed. But, then, there is no knowing what liquor will lead to."

"You are right, Doctor. Drink is an awful curse. I can never preach too strongly against it, as I feel that had it not been for you, my dear friend, I might have become a victim myself. Oh, Doctor, Doctor, you do not know how much I owe to you—how much gratitude I feel toward you. Don't think for a moment that I ever forget."

"Tut, tut, David. It was His will that you should have been saved to spread His word."

They entered Couterre's house, after gazing pensively at the ruins of the barn that had held a goodly quantity of grain and farm implements. They were met at the door by Tom.

"Have you heard anything of your father,

Tom?" Dr. Boosch inquired.

"Yes, he was here. He went away with Sheriff Barre. He has been arrested for murdering mother."

Tom sobbed as if his heart was breaking.

"There, there, Tom," said the man of God, "be brave. Remember that the entire responsibility of this home now rests upon your shoulders.

What did your father have to say?"

"He remembered nothing. He fell upon mother's body and broke down completely. He cried out that he was innocent—that he could not believe that he was capable of such a deed, no matter how drunk he might have been. He wanted to stay here for a while to arrange for the future, but Barre would not allow him to stay for more than half an hour. Father showed me an affidavit that he had made before Squire Townsend that he would never touch a drop of liquor again in his life."

"Poor man," said Mr. Maujer, "what a pity

that he had not done so long ago."

"Yes," echoed the doctor, "he might have been happy with his wife alive to-day. Oh, what misery is brought about through the curse of drink! Tom, as long as you live, never take a drop of liquor."

"Indeed, I never shall," replied Tom. "How could I ever forget such a lesson as I have been taught? My poor mother!"

"Tom," said the doctor, "do not give way, for you will have to take the place of your father and Alice will have to take the place of your mother. You are both old enough to care for

your little brother and sisters."

The doctor and the minister gave Tom some advice and consolation and encouragement, and then had quite a long conversation with Mr. Brickett, who was also coroner. The latter told them that Mrs. Couterre had been frightfully riddled with shot. It appeared to him as though both barrels of a shotgun had been emptied at her. He said that he would bring his wife after Richard's funeral was over and have her stay until Mrs. Couterre was buried, in order that she might instruct the children how to get along without their mother and to give them such comfort as lay in her power.

Dr. Boosch and Mr. Maujer then left, as it was almost time for the latter to start with Mrs. Boosch for the Broakley home and the doctor did not wish to remain away too long from Myra.

Returning to the doctor's house, they found Mrs. Boosch awaiting them in her daughter's room. She was anxious to go to Mrs. Broakley

and be of service to her. She could console her in this hour of her affliction as no other could. The minister immediately prepared himself and in a short while they drove off.

Arrived at the Broakley home they found that many persons had already gathered there. Mr. Maujer sought out Mr. Broakley, while Mrs. Boosch went directly to his wife, and those two gave spiritual consolation and comfort to both.

At the appointed hour Mr. Maujer read the service at the house, and the funeral cortege started for the little country church at the Corner, where the coffin was carried into the church and Mr. Maujer's eulogy began. He spoke long and earnestly. He dwelt on the uncertainties of life as exemplified in the sudden death of one in the prime of life and the full vigor of manhood; he spoke of the grieving parents, beseeching the Almighty to be with them now and through all time; he reverently committed them, and all present, to the care of the Heavenly Father, and referred to the inscrutable ways of Providence in taking away from the loving parents their only child. Mr. Maujer spoke feelingly, and at times his voice became faint with his emotion. The service closed with the singing by the little choir of "Abide With Me" and "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

And so, in the little churchyard, surrounded by the fields of growing grain and the whispering trees of the woodland, they laid away all that was mortal of Richard Broakley. And with the burying of his body they buried the love of one of the prettiest and sweetest women of Monroe County—Myra Boosch, now Mrs. James Carbon.

TICK THE TWENTY-SECOND

When Carbon arrived in New York he went to the Astor House and there was directed by a bellboy to Room 16B. In answer to his knock on the door a voice said, "Come in." He opened the door and saw in front of him the figure of a man seated on a chair, tilted back, with his feet cocked up on the window-sill. He did not even look around to see who his visitor was.

"Is this Mr. Clinton Eilen?" asked Carbon.

"The same," came the reply.

"I came to see you in answer to your advertisement regarding a prospecting tour out West."

"And who are you?" came in a drawl from

the figure.

"Amos Barcon is my name."

The figure slowly unwound itself from its tangled-up position and raised itself to its full height—an even six feet. It extended its hand with great deliberation and drawled:

"How do you do, Mr. Barcon? So you would like to take a whirl with me at hunting for the

metal that makes the mare go, eh?"

"Yes," replied Jim. "I have no ties to bind

me here, and I wanted to go out West, anyway. I have—or, rather, I can get—five hundred dollars, and if everything is agreeable to you we can start whenever you wish. I need only a day to settle my affairs and get the money."

"Let's see your fists," said Mr. Eilen. "Um, looks as if you were used to hard work. Do you

drink or smoke?"

"I have never done either."

"Ah, model young man, eh? Well, I like a drink once in a while, and as to smoking, why, I wouldn't do without it for a farm. Great consolation, that, when your mind is tangled up—kind of clears the fog off the brain. Ever done any prospecting?"

"Not much. Only around the mountains of

Pennsylvania."

"Not much in that," drawled Mr. Eilen. "Well, I haven't done much in that line, either, I think we are pretty even on that score. I have studied considerable, however, and if book learning will be of any benefit I will have a good supply on hand. So you want to go away as soon as you can, eh?"

"Yes," replied Jim. "As I said I have no ties to keep me here—my father and mother are

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both dead."

"No girl to leave behind? Or is it a case

of the girl not returning your love and that you are going away to show her that you can go away and never, never see her again—like in a story—eh?" said Eilen with a smile.

Carbon gave him a quick glance. He little knew, evidently, how near the truth he had come. All this while they had been standing. Carbon turned around as if he were seeking a chair in order to hide the crimson that had come into his face.

"Mr. Eilen," he said, "there are some things in a man's life that are sacred. I do not wish to talk about that. I came here in answer to your advertisement. Do you think I would be a desirable person to join you?"

"Now, look here, old man, I meant no offense. You are right—there are some things that are sacred to us. I shall never mention the subject again. Ever been West before?"

"No," replied Carbon. "I have never traveled

beyond New Jersey and Pennsylvania."

"Well, I have, and I want to tell you right now, from the beginning, that we will have before us no easy times. Five hundred dollars apiece will not carry us very far, I can tell you, and we will have to do some tall hustling. It is no picnic we are undertaking, Mr. Barcon, and you can make up your mind that we will have to go

through many hardships before we can see our

way clear to a fortune—if we ever do."

"I have taken everything into consideration," said Jim. "The greater the amount of work and the harder the task set before me, the more will I be pleased. It is just what I wish for."

"Well said, my friend. I think you will find me frank and honest in my dealings with you, and I feel sure that I will get the same in return. I like you, old man, and I think we can strike a bargain and call the deal closed. Take a chair and we will have a chat about our plans for the immediate future."

"Thanks," said Carbon. "I have seen little of the world and will be glad of the opportunity to travel around, even if I have to go through hardships and trials. I feel that we will pull

well together."

He looked Clinton Eilen square in the face. The latter was a man of about thirty years—not a handsome man, by any means, but his gray eyes were sharp and keen, his nose was elevated slightly, and his cheekbones protruded. The mouth was set firmly, showing determination, not unmixed with kindness. He was not of an excitable disposition, that was sure, for he drawled when he spoke, and there was a certain drollness in his speech that denoted that he had considerable

humor about him and would make an entertaining and interesting companion. Carbon took a great fancy to him at once, and the feeling

was evidently mutual.

"Now, let me say a word about myself, Mr. Barcon," Eilen said as he pushed a chair toward him. "I was born in New York City nearly thirty years ago My father kept a grocery store and did a good business. We were pretty wellto-do, as things go, and my father was able to send me to college and keep me there until I was twenty-three years old. Then he was suddenly stricken with paralysis and I was called home to attend to the business. But I had never had any fondness for the grocery or any other business that would keep me indoors. Besides, I had no training whatever for that line of business. And so, when my father died, a short while after, I took hold of the store in a half-hearted sort of way and kept things going. But when my mother followed him, two years later, I sold the business and went out West. I spent what money I derived from the sale of the store in traveling around and came back here to collect what was still due me—about seven hundred dollars. here I am. I have no one dependent upon me, never fell in love with a girl, and have been a happy sort of knockabout. Now I am ready

for another jaunt—and I hope it will be a profitable one, too."

"I want to say a few words about myself, too," said Carbon. "I was born near Egg Harbor City in New Jersey, a little over twentyfive years ago, and have had only a country school education. I have had to work pretty hard ever since I was a boy. My parents owned a farm, which was heavily mortgaged, and it took them years to clear this almost off. They did not live to see that entirely accomplished, however, for they both died suddenly about five years ago. I left immediately after they were buried and have never been near the place since. My lawyer sold the farm for me and put the money in bank to my credit. I have drawn upon that, instead of adding to it, and as a consequence have only about six hundred dollars

He did not say that the money he had drawn out was used not for his own personal wants, but to help those in distress. He did not say, furthermore, that there were many in Monroe County who had been beneficiaries of his little all—the money that his parents had worked for and saved. Neither did he say that he had often received the prayers and blessings of those who were tided over by him in time of financial

storm, and that there were children and parents who had received presents of shoes and wearing apparel at Christmas time from some unknown person, but suspected that they came from James Carbon.

"And so you see," concluded Jim, "I, too, am anxious for an opportunity to make my way in the world and better my financial condition, Mr. Eilen."

"Don't call me Mr. Eilen," drawled that person. "Don't call me Mr. Clinton Eilen; don't call me Mr. Clinton—Clint will do. We will be together much, you know, and it will be a waste of breath, and we will need all we have of that, I guess."

"Well, then, Clint, if you will call me Amos

we will quit even."

"All right, old man, Amos it will be—that sounds less formal. You say you want a day to get ready? All right. We need take very little with us. We can get whatever we need when we get to Chicago. And from there I propose going on to Denver. Then we will take a look around and see how the land lays. I will give up my room after to-morrow and will meet you at the station in Jersey City at, say, two o'clock in the afternoon day after to-morrow. Is that agreeable?"

"Perfectly," replied Carbon.

He looked out of the window at the seething, busy world rushing hither and thither up and down Broadway. How different from the peace and quiet to which he had been accustomed. A feeling of homesickness came over him. He had become so attached to the Boosches and to his work about the old homestead that it is little wonder that he felt a momentary pang of regret at the circumstance that had torn him away from them.

Old Trinity was just tolling the hour of three—the hour set for Richard Broakley's funeral. He wondered who were there; he wondered if Myra would be able to go; he wondered how Mr. and Mrs. Broakley were bearing up under the trial of the last sad rites to their son; he wondered if "Bill" Couterre's barn had been completely destroyed. He had torn himself away so suddenly that it was like a dream to be separated from those he had learned to love and respect and from the scenes that had become so familiar.

"Well Amos, what are you dreaming about? Goldfields, and mines, and quartz and lots of money, eh?" said Clint, after giving Carbon a few moments to himself.

"In a week or so we will see something entirely different from this," pointing out to Broadway.

"Yes, and I am anxious to get away. I would rather work hard in the open country than live a life of ease in this great town," replied Jim. "Just look at the way everybody is rushing around like mad. Is it always like this?"

"Yes, this is an everyday scene. Everybody seems bent on getting somewhere in the least possible time, as if there was nothing else in life to be attained. I dare say the most of them are hustling and bustling for a bare living. What a great town this is, and yet young fellows like you and I stand a much better chance of winning a fortune out West than here, I think."

"I hope so," said Carbon.

"I'm sorry you don't smoke," said Eilen, reaching over and taking a cigar from a half-filled box. "You would find it lots of comfort when you are camping out in the open. Lots of times when I have been a little down in the mouth I have taken my old pipe, fired it up, and felt then as if I would not change places with the richest man in the world."

He put a match to the cigar, puffed a few times and blew the fragrant smoke over at Jim.

"Well, I may take it up some day," replied Carbon, sniffing the odor of the cigar. "I often almost weakened, but thought it was an unnecessary expense, and so held out against it."

"Well, I don't think we could afford as good cigars as these—a pipe will have to do for us for some time, I guess. These were given to me, else they would not have been so good, I'll wager."

And so they continued on talking until about four o'clock, when Carbon suddenly arose and said that he would have to go if he was to catch his train. He wanted to get a good night's rest, too, for he had slept little within the last few days.

"All right, old man"—this phrase seemed to be popular with Eilen—"I'll put on my hat and walk with you to the ferry. I have nothing else to do just now. To-morrow I'll do a little shopping for what I actually need for the present. Anything I can get for you?"

"Nothing at all," said Carbon. He did not want Eilen to know that he had come to town with no clothes other than what he had on—it would create some curiosity on Clint's part and might lead to some questions that he would not like to answer.

Arrived at the ferry they shook hands and parted. And from that day they became firm and fast friends—a friendship that lasted through many years of privation and of prosperity.

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drink or smoke?"

"I have never done either."

"Ah, model young man, eh? Well, I like a drink once in a while, and as to smoking, why, I wouldn't do without it for a farm. Great consolation, that, when your mind is tangled up—kind of clears the fog off the brain. Ever done any prospecting?"

"Not much. Only around the mountains of

Pennsylvania."

"Not much in that," drawled Mr. Eilen. "Well, I haven't done much in that line, either, I think we are pretty even on that score. I have studied considerable, however, and if book learning will be of any benefit I will have a good supply on hand. So you want to go away as soon as you can, eh?"

"Yes," replied Jim. "As I said I have no ties to keep me here—my father and mother are

both dead."

"No girl to leave behind? Or is it a case

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But his words were of no avail. His daughter broke into hysterical sobbing and moaning, and were it not for her father's presence would undoubtedly have leaped out of the window. At length, under the influence of his soothing words, she calmed somewhat, and notwithstanding the flowing tears she kept up a brave heart and convinced her father that she had heeded Mr. Maujer's prayer.

Mary Lash had also returned from the funeral, having gone there in a neighbor's carriage. She immediately sought the Couterre children and began talking to them. There were three besides Alice and Tom—two girls and a boy—and Mary felt for the little ones from the very bottom of

her good heart.

Jennie, the youngest, three years of age, had been her pet, and it was seldom that Mary went anywhere that she did not go over to the Couterres' and importune them to let Jennie go with her. She told Alice, but not the other children, that the doctor had informed her that their father had been arrested and that he would have to stand trial, probably remaining in jail for many months before that would take place. She tried to assure her, however, that there must have been some terrible mistake and that ultimately he would be cleared of responsibility for the crime.

She was talking thus to Alice when Mrs. Boosch summoned her to Myra's room. The doctor was timid about leaving his wife alone with their daughter, lest she should burst into uncontrollable grief. He had thought matters over during his wife's absence and had concluded that it would be well to let the fact become known at once that his daughter and Carbon had been married. He knew that many of those present at the funeral must have wondered why Carbon was not there. In fact, frequent were the interrogations as to his absence, the doctor's wife had informed him, as it was well known that Richard and Carbon had been warm friends, and it was little wonder that they marveled at his non-attendance. Mary, when questioned, answered that he had gone out of town, she knew not why. Mrs. Boosch, also questioned, likewise said that he had suddenly gone away for reasons best known to himself.

And so Dr. Boosch, after a talk with his wife, concluded that it would be best to let the truth become known at once. They decided that Mary Lash should be the first one to be informed, and she could disseminate the news as she saw fit. That it would travel fast after that there was no doubt.

"Mary," said the doctor, "I wish you would remain here with Mrs. Boosch and Myra until

I come back. Between you three you ought to find plenty to talk about. I will not be long, mother," turning to his wife; "I know of no case that I have on hand just now that will detain me very long."

He came over to kiss her good-bye, as he always did, no matter how short a while he was to be gone, and as he did so he whispered a few words to her, to which she gave a responsive

nod of acquiescence.

After the departure of the doctor they talked about various subjects until finally Myra, tired out, asked her mother to prepare the bed for her, in order that she might lie down again. It was not very long before she was asleep. It was then that Mrs. Boosch saw her opportunity.

"Mary," she said, "I suppose you know that

Carbon has gone away?"

"Yes, the doctor told me. He said that he would never return."

"No, Mary, he will never come back."

Mrs. Boosch hesitated for a moment, while Mary looked inquiringly at her. It was a crucial moment between those two. The former did not know exactly how to let Mary into the secret, and Mary was full of curiosity, for she felt that Mrs. Boosch was inclined to be communicative.

Just at this point Myra turned around with

a sigh and raised her hand, which dropped limply back upon the cover. Mary's quick eye detected the strange ring upon her finger. Going over to her, ostensibly to smooth out the coverlet, she gave a hasty glance and saw that it was a wedding ring. Quickly it flashed through her mind—Richard Broakley and Myra Boosch had been married. That, then, was the secret. But what had that to do with Carbon's going away so suddenly; with his avowed intention never to return?

"Mary," said the doctor's wife, "sit down

beside me. Myra is asleep, is she not?"

"Yes, Mrs. Boosch, she is sound asleep. This has been a very trying day for her—this day of Mr. Broakley's funeral. I know what her love for Mr. Broakley was—"

"Mary," interrupted Mrs. Boosch, "there has been a misunderstanding—a terrible misunderstanding. Everybody thought that Richard and

Myra were engaged to be married."

"And were they not?" asked Mary, with a

startled look.

"Well, yes, in a way," responded Mrs. Boosch. She was still groping in the dark—groping for a way in which to qualify events without casting any reflection upon Richard Broakley's memory. She well remembered, now, the conversation her husband had had with Jim Carbon and which he

had repeated to her. She remembered, also, that he had told her that Carbon had said that the more he would be condemned the lighter would be the burden that Myra would have to bear.

She glanced over at her daughter, peacefully asleep with the knowledge that her mother was by her side. Yes, Carbon had offered himself as a sacrifice, and such he would have to be, for Myra's sake.

"Mary," she said, "you have been with us for many years. You know you are as one of the family. And so I will tell you, and you will be the first one to know it, that James Carbon and Myra are man and wife."

"Richard Broakley, you mean, Mrs. Boosch."

"No-James Carbon."

"James Carbon!" gasped Mary.

"Yes, they are man and wife, by the grace of God and a minister ordained."

Mary Lash looked at Mrs. Boosch for an instant. She doubted her own senses.

"James Car-bon mar-ried to Miss My-ra?" she said in monosyllables. "James Carbon mar-ried to Miss Myra? You are mistaken, are you not, Mrs. Boosch? Surely you mean Richard Broakley."

"No, my child, I mean what I say-James

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Carbon. And he has deserted her and has gone away."

"Deserted her?" echoed Mary. She reiterated this as if she doubted that she were awake or had

heard aright.

"Yes, Mary. And you must never question any of us regarding the matter. What I have told you is all you or any one else will ever know. You can tell any one you wish what I have just told you, Mary, but be sure to impress upon them that they are not to question any of our family."

Mary Lash had become ghastly pale. This, it seemed, was the climax of all the dreadful happenings since Richard's death. She arose from her chair, felt the room going around under her feet, and with a cry sank to the floor.

When she revived she found herself lying upon the cot the doctor had placed in the room for himself. Mrs. Boosch was seated beside her, holding her hand with motherly affection. She looked at the kindly face before her and said sorrowfully:

"Mrs. Boosch, I am broken-hearted—we are all broken-hearted—over what has taken place lately. But I never thought—I never dreamed that Jim Carbon was anything but one of the best men that the Almighty ever put on earth to win a woman's love. And that he had won from me."

"Yes, Mary, the doctor told me that. But

young hearts like yours will mend in time, as Myra's will have to. Remember, the world is wide and full of good young men."

"True, Mrs. Boosch, but there is only one

James Carbon."

Mary asked if she could go down for a cup of tea to revive her, to which Mrs. Boosch responded that she certainly could and that she might bring

up a cup for Myra and herself.

When Mary came down into the hallway she leaned her arms against my poor old frame, and the floodgates of her pent-up heart opened and the tears flowed freely, some of them dropping upon my face and rolling slowly down—like rain upon the window panes. Dear me, how I felt for that poor girl! She thought, then, that there was no other than Jim Carbon could ever take a place in her heart. She little knew that time assuages all griefs and heals all wounds.

When she returned with the tea Myra's mother said she could go out that evening, if she wished, as soon as the doctor returned. She had in mind that through the medium of Mary the news would go abroad, and the sooner the gossip was over the better. She knew full well what food it would be for the gossip-lovers, but she knew, also, that it would soon cease, as there was always something new to supply grist for that mill and

the newer events quickly overshadowed the older ones.

So, when evening came, Mary went over to Mrs. Transer's and startled her by the news. And later in the evening, when Mary Lash had gone home, Mrs. Transer hastened over to Mrs. Brownson's to tell her. The latter could hardly believe it—she was positive there was some mistake. It could not be possible that Jim Carbon, who had been so good to her and her children in their deepest hours of trial, was guilty of such an act. But Mrs. Transer assured her that the story had come from Mrs. Boosch herself and there could be no doubting it. Mrs. Brownson grieved deeply at the news of Carbon's having gone away, for he had been as a brother to her, and she would miss his friendly calls and his wise counsel.

She could not reconcile herself to the belief that Carbon was capable of doing a wrong act. No matter what others might say, there was one who would never utter a word in condemnation of him—and that was Mrs. Brownson. Whenever "Hank" Decker (who was prone to belittle others in the eyes of the widow in order that his own good qualities might stand out the more boldly) began to talk in a disparaging way of Carbon, she would say to him:

"Mr. Decker, let us change the subject. If there is good to say of him, I will listen; if not, I do not want to hear it."

My, how the gossips gossiped! How they put this and that together, and concluded that there always had been something suspicious about Carbon, though none could specify any particular incident that would have made them think so. They spared not Myra, either. They called her a flirt, for having encouraged Richard Broakley when she knew that she could not marry him, and even intimated that he had probably thrown himself from his horse with suicidal intent.

But in a short while this all died out and another topic had sprung up.

TICK THE TWENTY-FOURTH

MATTERS in the Boosch household were beginning to assume their normal condition again. Arthur Boosch had returned for a short stay home before going upon another business trip. He was both grieved and shocked when his father told him all that had transpired during his absence. He said that if he ever met Jim Carbon in his travels he would greet him as one of the best specimens of manhood he had ever met, and that should he be in want he would sell the very clothes off his back to relieve him. He said this earnestly to his father, and when Arthur, a man of few words, spoke thus, his father knew that he meant much.

Myra had regained some of her old-time self, after a few weeks, and was now beginning to take an interest in worldly affairs again. Her father and mother were with her almost constantly—in her walks, in her home, in her moments when her grief made her wish that she were dead and with her Richard.

But how changed she was! To me, who had seen her daily from the night that the doctor had

brought her-a new-born infant-to me, up to the night when Carbon had brought Richard home, she had always been joyous, happy, buoyant of spirit. How her eyes sparkled when looked at me-they fairly danced with the lightness of heart that made her so rosy-cheeked and healthy. How lightly she tripped across the hallway and out onto the porch, with that quick, springy step I had learned to know so well. How musical her voice had seemed to me, in comparison with my deep-toned note as I sounded the hours, as she gaily called to Richard to be patient, that she was only fixing her hair so that she would not look like a fright—as if that could be! And that lithesome figure of hers—never had I seen another so perfect.

And now! She came down the stairs a few days after the funeral and gazed at me as if I were a thing placed there, in the hall, to remind her of the distant, faded past—though it had been barely a week since she had last seen me. Her step was halting, as of one who was afraid of stepping into an abyss; her eyes were lustreless and full of sadness; her voice, when she spoke at all, sounded hollow and full of sorrow. Changed indeed, was she! It seemed almost impossible to me, ticking away in the same methodical way that I have through all joy and sunshine,

sorrow and storm, that the few days could have wrought so complete a change in her.

But now she was beginning to brighten up a little—as a lamp lightens up after the wick has been trimmed. Youth and a naturally buoyant spirit, added to time, it seemed to me, would overcome the blow that she had received and restore her to her old self again-bruised of heart, it is true, but full of hope for the future.

My, how I watched her each day for many years, and noted with joy as little by little the ring came back into her voice; as her step became lighter; as those eyes, though still tinged with sadness, became brighter and brighter until one day I saw a light come back that I had not

seen since the evening of that tragic night.

Myra, Myra! Could I but have told you of the love that was yours and that I knew so well was yours only. Could I but have told you that the man who was your husband had for you a love as deep as that of one you mourned. could I have assured you that, though your heart was aching for a dead love, there was a living love that was as strong, as pure, as good, as true, as that of Richard Broakley. But I am only a family clock, and it was only in my province to tick on and watch the developments of time and fate.

Dr. Boosch went about his professional duties the same as before, and, though no one could say what sadness there was in his heart, tried by his manner to cheer others. Save for the time that he was away on his calls, he was ever by his daughter's side, encouraging and brightening her by his words of cheer and comfort. His love for her, paternal as it had been, seemed to grow stronger and stronger. He never spoke to her of Carbon—never mentioned his name. The time would come, he knew, when, the wound having healed somewhat, he could speak to her on that subject—when he could lay bare to her the great sacrifice Jim had made—the goodness of the man who had stood "ready to be offered."

Mrs. Boosch, whose faith in the Almighty and her husband was such that she never despaired, no matter how great life's storms, went about as usual, frequently visiting the Broakleys and the Couterre children, spreading by her benign ways what cheer she could.

Mr. and Mrs. Broakley had not recovered from the shock of their son's death—it was apparent that they never would. Had there been other children, the loss might not have seemed so great, but with the only child—the only son—taken away so suddenly, they practically lived within themselves, seeing no one but Mr. and

Mrs. Boosch and the minister, and were literally

grieving themselves to death.

David Maujer, minister, was a busy man. His spiritual comfort was needed in many places he was here, there, and everywhere at the same time, it seemed. First he would take a run up to see his dearest and foremost friend, the doctor; then he would steal a few hours from his busy life to see the Broakleys; then he would rob himself of rest by driving up to the Couterre house and advising Tom and Alice and going over their accounts with them, telling them to keep him informed of every move they made; then he would go to see "Bill" Couterre in the jail and pray with him and talk with him and his counsel as to his case, which was soon to come up for trial. Besides all this, there were his parishioners to look after—the poor, the sick, the dying, and the dead. Busy man, indeed, was David Maujer. But his work was God's work, and he tired not.

Mary Lash had walked about for some days in a sort of dazed manner. It was some time before she could realize that Jim Carbon had gone away for good. It seemed to her that she must listen for him at mealtimes, as she did in the days agone. How often and often she had silently wept, as in the evening she sat alone. What a companion he had been to her—bringing

in the gossip of the neighborhood, reading the news to her as she was clearing off the table, doing all the heavy work for her, and escorting her home from the various picnics and festivals. Small wonder that she missed him! But she, too, was becoming reconciled, though her heart still ached, as did Myra's.

The Couterre children were managing fairly well. Alice, under the tuition of a kind neighbor, had become quite a "little mother." Tom, coached and encouraged by the doctor and Mr. Maujer, had taken up the burden and care of the farm, and had proved that he was made of stern stuff. The younger brothers and the little sister were full of grief for their dead mother, but Mary ran over often to cheer them and perform such duties for them as were too much for Alice. She sewed for them, made all of Jennie's clothes, and in other ways atoned in a measure for their loss.

Couterre was still languishing in jail, awaiting his trial. What that man suffered none could tell. He felt that he was innocent of the awful crime, but there were the facts—the circumstantial evidence was so strong that even he himself at times believed that perhaps, in that time that had been a blank to him, he had become so crazed with liquor that he might have committed

the deed. And so he suffered mental torture that threatened at times to dethrone his reason, were it not for Mr. Maujer's words of hope.

Matters were quietly and smoothly drifting along until the early days of September, when the cool of the evening and the slight tinges of color in the woodland indicated the approach of autumn, while here and there the fields that had been aglow with the ripening grain were bare and stubbly, for the harvesting had divested them of their richness of color. The barns were fairly bulging with the fruits of the toil of the men of brawn who had worked early and late. The hay lofts were stocked with fodder to keep the animals well nourished through the long winter months. It had been a good season, and those who had sowed well also reaped well.

It was one of those cool, tranquil evenings when the sun was going down in a lurid blaze, that "Hank" Decker came running up to the doctor's house and informed him that Mr. Broakley wished to see him as soon as he could possibly come over. Mrs. Broakley was not feeling well, said Decker, and Mr. Broakley was

somewhat alarmed.

"Very well," said the doctor, "wait a moment and I will go with you. I saw her yesterday, and I thought then that she was not looking

well—in fact, I had advised Mr. Broakley to take her away for a change of scene, but he said she would not listen to any proposition involving her leaving the place where their son was born and raised."

"She do be a-takin' Richerd's death purty hard," replied Hank. "I hain't seen narthin' of her sence the day he wuz buried ontil terday. An' Mr. Broakley, he be a-neglectin' of his work, too. Ther hain't ben much done on ther farm, I kin tell yer, sence Richerd died."

"Mother," said Dr. Boosch to his wife, "I must go over to the Broakleys' at once. Decker just came over for me. I have noticed that Mrs. Broakley has been failing fast since the death of her son. There is nothing that I can do—it is a disease that no doctor can help—it is a disease that only the Almighty can cure—a broken heart. I fear the worst."

He joined Decker in a moment, and they walked briskly over to the Broakleys'. Mr. Broakley met the doctor at the door and told him that his wife was up stairs in her room asleep. He said that she had not felt well all night, complaining of pains about her heart, but that now she appeared to be resting quietly. He said that what had alarmed him, when he had asked Decker to go for the doctor, was that her face had

turned a peculiar purple color, such as he had never seen before.

They went up to Mrs. Broakley's room and looking at her Mr. Broakley said:

"See, Doctor, all the purple has left her face. She is all right now—she is sleeping peacefully."

Dr. Boosch stepped over to the bed and gave a quick glance at the form lying there, and took her hand for a moment. Then he listened at her heart for an instant. He turned around to Mr. Broakley, who was rubbing his hands together in seeming pleasure at the change in his wife's condition. Then he walked over to him, took his hand, with the other upon his shoulder, and with a voice that was quivering with restrained emotion said to him:

"Mr. Broakley, good friend, good father,

good husband, your wife is asleep—forever!"

Mr. Broakley looked at the doctor with eyes that were blank. There was no sign of the outburst of grief that he had expected—no sign of a tear, even. He released his hand from the doctor's and said softly:

"Dr. Boosch, it is His will that she should join Richard. It is better thus. I am alone

now, am I not?"

"Yes—no, not alone. The Father up there is with you, my dear friend," answered the doctor,

who was alarmed at the utter absence of the breakdown he had looked for.

Mr. Broakley walked over to his wife's body, kissed her thrice, and calmly went down to the dining-room, where he went to a drawer, took out

an envelope, and handed it to Dr. Boosch.

"Doctor," he said, "my wife asked me that if anything happened to her I should give you this envelope. I know not what is in it—I care not. You will make the arrangements for the funeral, will you not, Doctor, and you will be sure that Mr. Maujer conducts the services!"

This was said as deliberately as if he were making some commonplace business arrangement. There was no betrayal of emotion, no visible sign of grief, no wavering of the voice, no tear-stained eyes. The doctor glanced at the envelope in his hand. It was simply inscribed "To Doctor Boosch." He carefully put it in his coat pocket and said:

"Yes, I will attend to everything—everything, my dear friend. Mr. Maujer I will send for immediately—I know he will come at once.

And you—you shall go home with me."

"No, no, no, I will not leave her-until they

lay her away."

Still no sign of grief—still no tears—still no wavering of the voice.

TICK THE TWENTY-FIFTH

WHEN Dr. Boosch returned home he informed his wife and Myra of the death of Mrs. Broakley. They were both shocked and grieved at the sad news. He went into his study and there opened the envelope Mr. Broakley had given to him. In it was a sealed letter addressed to "Myra Boosch." He called his daughter and handed It was in Mrs. Broakley's handwriting. it to her. She tremblingly opened it, as one who gets a missive from the dead, and read on and on; the tears falling upon the pages, until she reached the end. Then she folded the letter, put it back in the envelope, and without a word to her father went to her room and locked it up in her writing-desk. She fell upon her knees and prayed that the Father who was watching over her Richard would take unto Himself his mother and bring them together in that heavenly home that knows no separation.

In the evening Myra came to her father, and lovingly putting her arms about his neck, looked into those kindly eyes, and said:

"Papa, the letter was from Mrs. Broakley."

"Yes, my child," he answered, "I knew that."

"That dear, good woman in that letter expressed her affection for me—her love for me was as a mother, she said—and in order to show how deep was her love for her Richard she had written to me, and among other things wished to say that she had willed me the pretty little house in town that she owned. You know the house, papa, in East Stroudsburg?"

"Yes, I do, Myra—it is indeed a pretty little

house."

"Yes, and she wrote that she hoped that some day we would live in it. She expressed the wish that when she had passed into the beyond I would take care of Mr. Broakley and be a daughter to him—for he would have no child or relative left. It seems to me, papa, that she felt that she was near the end when she wrote that letter, for it is full of sadness and heartaches for Mr. Broakley, whom she entrusts to my loving care. I shall go to the funeral, papa—I shall go. And then we will bring Mr. Broakley home with us. You will make him stay here, won't you, papa?"

"Such was my intention, Myra. I wanted him to come with me this afternoon, but he said,

'No-not until they lay her away.'"

Two days thereafter the friends and neighbors were gathering at the Broakley house for the

services, which were to be held at two o'clock. Mr. Broakley had gone about in a manner that was not at all understandable to the doctor. He exhibited no intense grief over the death of his wife, save that he appeared as a man who walked about in a trance. He rarely spoke to any one, and was almost continuously by the side of his wife's body. His face had become haggard and worn and his hair, which had been sprinkled with gray, had become white within those two days.

Dr. Boosch and his wife, either one or the other, had been with him day and night, consoling and comforting him, but he listened quietly and merely answered: "It is His will—she is with Richard. And I am alone."

That was all he said when any one spoke to him. Mr. Maujer had called almost immediately after the doctor had notified him by one of the farm hands going to town, and had prayed with Mr. Broakley and urged him to bear with Christian fortitude the awful affliction that had come to him, to which came the one response—the one refrain: "It is His will—she is with Richard. And I am alone."

When Myra came with her father and mother all eyes were turned upon her. It was the first time that she had been seen in public since her

marriage to Jim Carbon had become known. She passed through the crowd, heeding not the curious—and sometimes impertinent—eyes that followed her. She immediately sought out Mr. Broakley, who was in the back parlor, and falling upon his neck kissed him time and time again. She had not seen him since Richard's death and was astonished at the change that had come over him—how he had aged! It seemed almost incredible to her that such a change could take place in the short time that had elapsed.

She walked into the room where lay Mrs. Broakley and went up to the coffin. She saw there the face that she had known so well, the lips parted as if she were smiling—smiling at something Richard had said. How often, Myra recalled now, she had wished she could where his mother now lay—in her coffin—and that she might be sitting on the heavenly throne with him. She thought of the letter Mrs. Broakley had left for her and of all that it contained, and a great sob arose and the tears welled up. She returned with faltering steps to Mr. Broakley and remained by his side.

The last of the mourners were arriving. Mrs. Brownson was one of these. Her delay was occasioned by the artifice of "Hank" Decker, who pretended that something was wrong with

the harness and that he had better drive slow. This would give him an opportunity to say what he wished to say. The fact that they were going to a funeral did not deter "Hank" for one moment from his resolution that he would find out how the widow looked upon him.

Shortly after they left the Brownson house Decker, who was driving and was seated alongside of the widow, opened the conversation on a topic that was so near to his heart—or to his pocket-

book, perhaps.

"Missus Brownson," he said, letting the reins fall lightly upon the team, "it be er sad mishun

we be er a-goin' on ter-day, be'n't it?"

"It certainly is, Mr. Decker. It seems that we have been called frequently upon these sad missions recently. There was Aunt Sarah last May, then Richard Broakley, then Mrs. Couterre, and now Mrs. Broakley—all within five months."

"It be orful fer Meester Broakley," said "Hank," hedging around to the point he wanted to make—loneliness. "It be hard fer er man ter be left erlone, Missus Brownson, but it be moughtier harder fer a 'oman. Er man kin git uset ter bein' erlone, but with er 'oman it be differunt. Be'n't it so?"

"You are right in a way, Mr. Decker. A man can get along much better than a woman—

that is if the children are grown up a little and can help themselves. And, then, he can go out and see other folks and pass the time some other way besides being in the house all the time and feeling his loneliness. A woman should not be blamed for marrying again."

"Thet be ther pint I were a-goin' ter make," said Decker, evidently encouraged, "thet be ther pint eggsacterly, Missus Brownsun. I hev noticed thet yer were moughty lonerly now an' agin' an' hev often wondurd thet yer did not sot yer eyes on sum good man thet c'u'd be er companeron ter yer an' help yer with ther farm."

"I have felt lonely at times and have sometimes thought that Mr. Brownson would not want me to go through the remainder of my life without a companion." She said this as if she would qualify herself. Decker's face assumed a look of pleased surprise at this sudden admission

of the widow that she was susceptible.

"Missus Brownsun," he said, his face radiant with smiles, "I be moughty tickled ter hear yer talk thet a-way. Do yer know yer air a young 'oman yit, an' ther be menny a man as 'd be proud fer ter hev ther honner ter lead yer ter ther altar."

"Mr. Decker," said the widow, with a blush overspreading her face, "you flatter me. But

perhaps some day I may make up my mind to marry again. I know a man who will be good to me and my children and who will take my lamented husband's place in my heart. And he is not far away, either, Mr. Decker."

"Hank" turned quickly toward the widow and looked at her with his sharp, ferret-like eyes.

"I be moughty glad fer ter hear thet. Pears ter me thet yer haint got fur ter go ter find a good man, eh? Ther be lots of 'em aroun' yere. Men thet yer know be good an' true, too, Missus Brownsun. Mought I ast yer who ther lucky man be?"

There was no doubt in his mind, now, that she referred to him. He had watched her interests—from selfish motives, it is true—and had fairly doted on her children—when she was around. He felt that "Hank" Decker was a wily and shrewd man. He had played his part well and was going to reap his reward, he thought. He turned to the widow, his eyes fairly dancing with delight.

"No, I don't mind telling you, Mr. Decker you have been so good to me and have seemed like one of the family, and I feel that you will

rejoice when you hear who it is."

"I suttinly will rejice," said Decker, who could scarcely restrain his delight. He had permitted

the lines to fall upon the horses and they were going along at a slow gait.

"Well, it is Mr. Farson."

"Farson!" fairly yelled "Hank."

"Yes, you know he and I were school children together. And we were more than that, too, when we were young."

Decker leaned over, picked up the reins and gave the horses a vicious crack with the whip that startled them into a jump that almost threw Mrs. Brownson out of the carriage. He said not another word until they reached the Broakley house, at full speed.

When Mrs. Brownson entered the room she was surprised to see so many present. It appeared to her that half the population of Monroe County had come to pay respect to the memory of Mrs. Broakley. She was surprised to see Myra there, also. She went over to her, kissed her affectionately and shook hands with Mr. Broakley, saying a few words of sympathy to him.

A few minutes later Mr. Maujer arrived. When he came in Mr. Broakley stepped over to Dr. Boosch and said that he wanted to be alone for a few minutes with his dead wife—he wanted to bid her farewell forever on this earth. He said this coolly, dispassionately, yet the doctor hesitated. He feared lest Mr. Broakley's seeming calm was

merely pent-up grief that might suddenly give

way and prove fatal. Finally he said:

"Mr. Broakley, do not give way to your feelings. We will leave you alone for a few minutes, but you must bear up bravely. Remember, as you said, she is with your son."

"There is no danger of my giving way," he said, with a sad smile upon his face. "I am strong of will and self-possessed, am I not?"

"Yes," answered the doctor, though still fear-

ful of his calm demeanor.

Mr. Broakley entered the candle-lit room and the doctor closed the door. When he thought that sufficient time had elapsed for the parting, Dr. Boosch opened the door. As he did so he heard Mr. Broakley cry out:

"Sweetheart! Sweetheart! Don't leave me alone! Don't leave me alone! Don't leave me

alone!"

It was agonizing, heart-rending, to hear this appeal of the white-haired man leaning over the coffin of his beloved wife—of his "sweetheart" still, even in death. He stepped quickly to the side of Mr. Broakley, who gave a gasp as if his heartstrings had snapped asunder. He led him to the old-fashioned horsehair sofa and there worked over him for some time. Finally the doctor emerged from the room, softly closed the

door, and hastily sought out Mr. Maujer. They held a hurried whispered conversation. Then the man of God, turning to the assembled mourners, with voice that was low and tremulous, slowly said:

"Dear friends, kind friends, God Almighty, in His divine wisdom, has taken Mr. Broakley home to his wife and son! That which He hath joined together He let not man put asunder. The funeral of Mrs. Broakley is postponed. Let us pray."

He paused for a moment that the wave of surprise and sorrow at his announcement might subside, and then began, softly, his voice gradually becoming stronger as he poured out his whole

soul in that prayer:

"Heavenly Father," David Maujer, minister, began, "we beseech Thee to be with us to-day—in this house of death. We ask that Thou wouldst be with all those assembled here. O Lord, we grieve not—yea, we rejoice—that Thou hast taken unto thyself this father and this mother. We rejoice that thou hast taken this father and husband, that he may not be alone. We rejoice that, though he be dead, yet shall he live again, with those that he loved so well. Thou hast called them home, O God, that they may be reunited and dwell in Thy heavenly kingdom

Father, be with us, that we may learn Thy ways and walk in Thy paths and live in Thy love—for we, too, shall some day be called by Thee to that everlasting home. Be with us that we may lead better lives—that we may love Thee more—that we may be good and strong in Thy faith—that we may comfort the poor, the sick, the needy, the widow, the orphan. We ask this in the name of Christ, our Redeemer. Amen!"

After the prayer Mr. Maujer announced that the double funeral would take place two days thereafter.

And on the day after the morrow they were laid away, side by side, in the little churchyard at the Corner where slept their Richard.

TICK THE TWENTY-SIXTH

GRACIOUS me! Here I have been ticking away about the events that transpired for three months after Iim Carbon had gone away, almost forgetting, dear reader, that you would wonder what had become of that good soul that I—and you, too, I hope—had learned to love. fore I will not dwell upon the loneliness that overcame me, of the void there seemed to be after he had gone. I will not dwell upon how often I had thought that if only Carbon were here, with his cheery manner and his ever-ready, unselfish devotion to those around him, how much lighter would have been the burdens that were borne by those afflicted. For he would have spread sunshine where there was shadow; he would have brought a ray of hope where there was despair, by that bright, fresh, buoyant, hopeful, Christian spirit that pervaded all his doings.

Ah, me! Perhaps I am dwelling too much upon the goodness of you, Jim Carbon, but I cannot help it. None other knew you and studied you as I did from the time you came here

to the sad hour when I last saw you pass up the stairs on your final trip to your room. None other knew, then, that though you were absent, your heart was still here, and that I was sure your thoughts were often upon all—even including me, the old family clock, that you used to look at so cheerily and hopefully.

Now, now! Here I am, drifting away

again. And so—

Jim Carbon and Clint Eilen had met at the appointed hour in Jersey City. They each carried brand-new handbags and were decked out in entirely new suits of clothes. Carbon wore eyeglasses—not that he needed them, but they would help somewhat to hide his identity should he by any chance meet some one he knew—although that chance was remote. He had a three days' growth of beard—black and stubbly—for which he apologized to Clint to the effect that he was going to raise a full beard in order that he might look like a "real Western gold digger." They had two hours to wait for their train and adjourned to a restaurant to while away the time in eating and chatting.

"Well, old man," said Clint, "this is our last

meal in the East—I wonder for how long?"

"It will be my last for all time," answered Jim. "I do not want to come back—never."

"Come, come, Amos; some of these days you will have your pockets full of gold, and then you will want to return and show your friends that you know how to spend money as well as make it. That will be the time you will come back."

"Never. I have made up my mind firmly and determinedly, Clint. There will be no wavering from that, let me assure you. I have no ties here, and should I be fortunate enough to become rich or even fairly well-to-do, I shall travel over the world—but come back East again, never."

"I tell you what, old man, I will wager you a big diamond ring—one as big as a dishpan that some day you will be taking a train back here. Is it a go?"

"Yes," said Carbon, with a smile; "but first we will have to get the wherewithal to buy one. If I am no better off than I will be after I buy my ticket, it will have to be a very small-sized dishpan."

"Well, if all goes right the wager holds, does it not?" said Clint, extending his hand to bind

the bargain.

"It does, Clint, but I am sorry to say that you will lose," replied Jim, taking his hand and sealing the contract.

"And now let us settle about money matters," said Clint. "We must pool our cash, for it will be a case of share and share alike, whether we win or lose. If all goes well we will draw up partnership papers; if not, we will have to bear the loss equally. Who is to be cashier, you or I?"

"I would just as soon have you handle the money—you have had more experience than I," said Carbon.

"But handling the money is not the only thing. There must be a head to this outfit some one must have the right to decide when we are in doubt—there must be a leader, in fact, and we must agree to abide by his decision."

"All right, then, Clint, you will be the leader."

"No, that is imposing a task upon me that I don't relish. I never did take much stock in my executive ability—never saw any one else that did, either. Let's toss up a cent and let that decide—and I hope I lose."

"Agreed," said Jim, "and may you win."

The coin was tossed, heads Barcon wins, tails he loses. Heads it was, and pocketing the coin as a keepsake, Clint sprang up from his chair, put out his hand, firmly grasped that extended in return, and said:

"Congratulate you, old man-boss, I mean.

You are to command and I am to obey. Here is my money," handing over five crisp one-hundred dollar bills and striking a semi-comic, semiserious attitude, "and if you forsake me 'twill be proper for me to say that for once in my life have I misplaced confidence in one I thought was

fair and square."

"Clint," said Carbon, earnestly, giving him a grip that almost made him wince, muscular man that he was, "no fear of that. I pledge you my honor as a man that you will never regret the day you met Amos Barcon. We shall work together, we shall share hardship and privation together, if need be, and if it is God's will that prosperity come to us, we will not forget this moment, when we swear eternal friendship, eternal brotherhood."

"Say, old man," said Clint, "you kind of touch me around the heart, you do. Look here, Amos, I want you to feel that you have in me from now on a sincere and earnest friend—a brother. God bless you!"

Those two men grasped hands with a grip that spoke more than volumes of effusive promises

and verbose language.

"I was almost going to ask you to have a cigar, old man, but I remember that you said you don't smoke. However, if you think my

smoking won't tempt you when you see how much I enjoy it, I will fire away and puff until I am black in the face."

"Go ahead, Clint-you may tempt me, for I am inclined to think that I will take to a pipe when we get to digging and knocking around in

the open."

"Good boy! Why, when you get started you will rather give up eating than smoking. You just wait until you are laying off under the blue canopy of heaven—rather poetical, ain't I, but I read that somewhere—with your bones all sore, your muscles aching, discouraged at the prospect. Then pull out your pipe, light her up, and watch the blue rings go up and fill you with new ideas as you see them go up, up, and then fade away-like your grouchy feeling does after a few puffs. By the way, Amos, do you know that it must be near train time?"

"Why, yes, we have only fifteen minutes," answered Carbon, pulling out his watch. "But

it is only a step to the station from here."

"Oh, just time enough to write a line, isn't there? Lend me your pencil, old man, and I will drop a line to the sweetest girl that ever-"

"What?" interrupted Jim. "Why, Clint, I thought you told me that you had never fallen

in love with any girl."

"Did I? Well, then, I was trying to conceal from a man I knew not well enough to entrust with my life's secret"—here he paused, and there was a tinge of bitterness in his heretofore flippant manner—"but I will confess to you, Amos, that I am in love with one of the best girls ever born. But wait a minute until I scribble a few lines. Hardly polite to write with a pencil, but I'll start it off with 'I take my pen in hand,' and maybe she'll not notice it."

He wrote rapidly for a few minutes, took an envelope from his coat pocket, wrote the address on it, and dropped it into a box at the corner. Meanwhile Carbon had purchased two tickets for Chicago and ten minutes later they were speeding on their way—full of hope, of health, and of vigor. When they had seated themselves in the car, Clint resumed:

"Well, you see it's this way, Amos. As I said before, I am in love with one of the sweetest girls that ever breathed. I am not a jealous man, Barcon"—he was resuming somewhat his ordinary frivolous manner—"and so I don't mind telling you her name, because I don't think you will ever meet her—or, if you do, I am not afraid that you will cut me out, for we wouldn't take a prize at a beauty show, either one of us, would we?"

Carbon laughed outright at this frank remark.

"No," he said, taking up the vein of humor that was intermingled with the earnestness of his partner. "I certainly would not be able

to cut you out on that score."

"Well, old man"—he could never divorce himself from this favorite expression, it seemed, -"the name of the sweetest and best girl is Florence—'Flo' I call her—Vercool. Good old Dutch name, isn't it? She would have said, 'Darling, I'm yours,' in a minute, only up steps her guardian, a good, fat, sleek, well-fed pusson, and cries, 'Halt! Young man, the chap that marries Florence Vercool must be able to show a bankbook that will assure me that she will never want for anything.' And down comes his foot—and when that foot comes down the earth trembles, and so do I. And that is the reason, Amos, why I am anxious to acquire a neat little bank account. And when I do, old man, you will be my best man, won't you?"

"Why, certainly," replied Jim. He was trying to conjure up in his mind where he had heard that name before—surely it was not such a common one that one heard it every day. Florence Vercool, Florence Vercool, where had he heard that name, kept constantly revolving in his mind. Suddenly it dawned upon him that a young lady of that name had spent the summer a year ago at the

Marshall's Falls Hotel. That this person and Clint's "best girl that ever lived" were one and the same never for a moment occurred to him.

And so they talked, and read, and dozed, and occasionally they would go into the smoking car together so that Clint could have his "consoler," until they reached Chicago, where they spent several days looking around the town, gazing upon the broad expanse of Lake Michigan, and purchasing some things. From there they went directly to Denver. Eilen had a letter of introduction from Mr. Henry Houston, a mining broker, having an office in New York, to George Pell, proprietor of a hotel and part owner of a silver mine, who had had considerable experience in mining and prospecting, and this proved of vast benefit to the partners.

Pell was a big, broad-shouldered, muscular man, over six feet in height, and was so constituted that nothing appeared ever to ruffle his calm and deliberate manner. He took quite a fancy to the "boys," as he called Clint and Carbon, and to him they owed much of the success and prosperity that came to them after many years of hardship and privation—aye, even of want.

"Now look here, boys," said Mr. Pell, after reading the letter of introduction, "I want to tell you one thing, and that is, don't think that pros-

pecting is a kid-glove affair. You have hard work in front of you and a hard life, too, among hard people. You want to take shooting-irons with you, and make it a rule never to allow a man to get the drop on you. When you see a man reach for his hip pocket, get there first, or else you will be the leader in the procession to the cemetery. You fellows don't want to hang around ginshops, either—keep away from them, boys. If you want anything in the line of liquor—which is a good thing when you really need it—take a jug with you. I am sorry that I am busy to-day, but to-morrow I will give up the whole day to you, for I would do anything for Mr. Houston."

When Clint and Carbon came around the next day Mr. Pell was ready for them with a two-horse rig and took them for a drive through the country, describing and explaining to them the various mineral locations, going over the beauties of Pike's Peak, and, in fact, giving them all the information that would interest them and be of value to them.

After stopping in Denver four days, most of which time was spent in purchasing such necessary articles as Mr. Pell told them they would need, they started for Virginia City, whither the seekers after silver had been making their way, and some even returning, disheartened.

TICK THE TWENTY-SEVENTH

It was in the first week of October that the case of the Commonwealth against William Couterre, charged with the deliberate murder of his wife, Louisa Couterre, was on the calendar for trial in the County Court. When court opened on Monday morning the room was crowded with friends, neighbors, relatives and sympathizers for Couterre. He had been liked by nearly all, for when sober he was inoffensive, obliging to everybody, and always willing to do a hand's turn for any one in distress.

He had hired as counsel to defend him a bright young lawyer, Leonard Nash, who had gone over his case with him time and again, but with no other result than that he could prove nothing to offset the overwhelming circumstantial evidence of the Commonwealth. Nash realized the futility of attempting to refute the evidence of Couterre's own children, and had made up his mind to make a powerful appeal to the jury for acquittal on the strength of previous good character and irresponsibility for his act, if such it were, owing to his maudlin condition due to over-indulgence

in liquor. He would put his whole soul into that appeal, for if it failed he would be helpless to do further.

The jury was composed of nine rugged, honest farmers of Monroe and three substantial business men of Stroudsburg. They had all known Couterre for many years, but had sworn to render their verdict according to the testimony, regardless of any personal ill or good will toward the man on trial for his life.

When Couterre was brought in there was a buzz and a hum that was instantly hushed by the rapping of the judge's gavel. Everybody was astonished at the marked change in his appearance. From a ruddy-faced, strong, robust man, his confinement in jail had reduced him almost to a skeleton, while the pallor of his face was in marked contrast to his appearance before his incarceration. He looked around appealingly at his brothers and children and many friends, and sat throughout the entire trial with bowed head and trembling lips.

After the usual preliminary court routine, counsel for Couterre and the District Attorney announced that they were ready to proceed with the case.

Mr. Nash opened with his argument for the defense. He called attention to the fact that the

Commonwealth's findings rested entirely upon a suppositious case; no one could swear that the person seen coming from the barn was Couterre; could it not be possible for some one to have a stormcoat and oilskin hat similar to the one worn by Couterre, and could it not be possible, also, that Alice and her mother were mistaken in thinking that it was the prisoner? He laid particular stress upon the fact that Alice and her mother had not seen the shotgun in his hands, urging upon the jury to allow no theory to sway them that was not directly borne out by evidence. Finally, in closing, he said:

"Gentlemen of the jury, I must ask you to bear in mind that you are trying a man for his life. I beg of you to remember that this man was a good man, save when drinking, and that he loved his wife and children—that he worked hard for them that they might have a good home and enjoy all the privileges of that home. Do not take this man away from those children and leave them fatherless, as well as motherless. I beg of you, gentlemen, I beseech you, I implore you, to restore this man to his little family, that they may have his protection—his fatherly care. Think of how much this man's life means—not only to himself but to the motherless children who are struggling along against a cold, bitter world. Would you

take them away from their best friend in the world—their father?"

The first witness called by the prosecution was Alice, who, after taking the oath, was examined as follows:

"Your name is Alice Couterre, is it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"You lived at home with your father and mother, did you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"You were present on the day when your father quarreled with your mother and when your mother was shot—on the 18th day of June?"

"Yes, sir, I was."

The District Attorney then told Alice to tell the jury, in minute detail, of what had occurred on that day, recalling to her that she was under oath to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, to which she replied in a straightforward way, turning to the foreman of the jury, Mr. Milton Fetter:

"I arose about half-past six that morning and went to the barn to let the cows out into the field. My father had been drinking heavily for two days before, and as he was usually cross when in that state I hastened back to the house when I saw him going toward the barn. He had hidden several bottles in the barn somewhere,

and was making trips from the house to the barn every once in a while. He did not come in for dinner, nor did we see anything of him until supper time, when he came into the diningroom and without a word gave my brother Tom a blow on the ear. Tom gave him a shove that seemed to anger him very much and got out of his way. Mother and I went upstairs to keep out of his way, also, but he followed us up, abusing my mother and accusing her of having turned his children against him."

"What particular remark impressed itself upon your mind at the time?" the prosecuting officer

asked.

"Father said, 'I'm getting tired of all this my own children are being turned against me some day I'll end it all."

"He said this as he was going down the stairs,

did he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"And when did you see him again?"

"Not until some time after midnight. It was storming fearfully, and mother was getting worried about father. She woke me up—I occupied the bed with her that night—and we stood by the window for some time, watching the lightning. Finally, during one of the flashes, we saw father come out of the barn."

"How did you know that it was your father?"
"I saw, just for a moment, that he had on his stormcoat and oilskin hat."

"And what occurred thereafter?"

"We waited for a moment, mother and I, and I was just stepping away from the window to go down stairs to unlatch the door when there was a terrific crash, and a second later mother—"

Alice stopped for a moment to give way to the tears that flowed. Couterre raised his head for the first time, glanced over at his favorite child dressed in deep black, and he, too, burst into heavy sobbing. There were few dry eyes in the court room, even Judge Newman cautiously reaching under his desk in order that he might hide his emotion. When she had calmed somewhat she resumed:

"Mother dropped at my feet with a piercing scream. She had been riddled with shot. After I had heard that awful scream and seen mother fall down I fainted away and did not come to until after Tom and the other children had rushed into mother's room. Then brother William went after Dr. Boosch, and when he came he told us that mother was dead. When Dr. Boosch went back home he took us with him, leaving Tom to go for the undertaker."

Here Alice burst into tears again and there

was a repetition of the wave of sympathy for Tom and Alice and the other children. The District Attorney asked her a few more questions—minor ones, bearing upon family matters, and then announced that he was through with her and called, "Thomas Couterre to the stand." Alice stepped down from the platform and going over to her father, threw her arms about his neck, and sobbed bitterly, until the constable gently led her away.

Tom then went upon the stand. His testimony was much to the same effect as that of Alice—it related to his father's drinking habits, to his father going on the trip to town and returning intoxicated, to his father's quarrel with him and of his leaving the room suddenly in order to get out of his father's way, and then to his mother's awful scream, late that night, bringing him from his bed to her room, to find her and Alice both lying upon the floor. He described Alice's words when she returned to consciousness and how he had placed his mother upon her bed, his brother going for Dr. Boosch, and the burning of the barn.

"Thomas," asked the prosecuting attorney, "your father was in the habit of keeping a double-barreled shotgun in the barn, was he not?"

"Yes, sir. It was always hanging over the oatbin; it was always loaded and ready cocked."

"Now, Thomas, tell me exactly where the oatbin was."

"The oatbin was directly by the window fac-

ing the house, so-"

Here Tom drew a diagram of the house and the window where his mother and Alice stood that night, and of the barn and the window in it.

"The barn was ninety feet from the house,"

he said in reply to a question.

"How soon after you reached your mother's room did you notice that the barn was on fire?"

"It was burning when I reached her room."

"How long a time do you suppose elapsed between the time you heard your mother scream and when you saw the barn blaze?"

"It only took me a minute to get to mother's room—my room was just across the hall from

hers."

"Did your father come back to the house that night?"

"No, he came back the following day, shortly

after Mr. Brickett, the undertaker, arrived."

"When you saw your father again—that is, when he came back the following day—did he have his oilskin hat and stormcoat with him?"

"Yes, sir."

"That will do, Thomas."

Mr. Brickett was then called to the stand.

He testified to the fact that Mrs. Couterre's body was fairly riddled with shot; he was positive that both barrels of a shotgun had been fired at her. He also testified to having seen Couterre when he returned home, and was certain that he had his stormcoat and hat with him. Dr. Boosch and Mr. Maujer were also called and gave testimony that was practically the same.

Court then adjourned for the day.

The following morning, when court convened, Mr. Nash attempted by cross-examining Alice to show that she might have been mistaken about the person she saw leaving the barn. It was his intention, evidently, to attempt to prove that some person might have been an enemy of Couterre's and might have fired at the figure at the window, supposing it to be he, but he was not very successful, for Alice, when recalled by the District Attorney, said she was positive that it was her father, for the reason that she had stated.

The other witnesses were taken up by Mr. Nash, and under direct and redirect examination told practically the same stories that had been elicited by the District Attorney. The remainder of the day was consumed by this, and at three o'clock counsel for Couterre and the prosecuting attorney announced that they were through with the witnesses and would sum up the next day.

On Wednesday morning the court room was crowded to the doors and many were unable to gain admission and loitered about the Court House, eager to glean whatever news could be gotten from those near the door. It was rumored that the summing up would be short and that it was likely that Judge Newman would charge the jury and that they would retire for deliberation

before nightfall.

The District Attorney began his summing up immediately after court opened. He called the attention of the jury to the evidence that Couterre had been in the habit of going on periodical sprees, and to the testimony of his children that when under the influence of liquor they were afraid of him, and to the ugly frame of mind in which he was on the night of the crime. He went step by step over every move that Couterre had made during the day and night of the crime, drawing upon his imagination as he pictured him quarreling with his wife, going out of the house in a passion, going into the barn with his brain fired with anger, taking a drink of whiskey from a bottle he had hidden there, setting fire to the barn, taking the gun from its place over the oatbin, and then, seeing his wife at the window, deliberately taking aim, firing at her, throwing the gun back into the flames to hide the evidence of the weapon

with which he had killed her. In closing he urged the jury, in the interest of the Commonwealth, to find a verdict of murder in the first degree

as a warning to all men of vicious habits.

Judge Newman charged the jury as to the law, instructing them to render their verdict impartially on the strength of the evidence and not to be swayed by any emotion created by counsel for either side, and the jury then retired. After four hours' deliberation they sent word that they had agreed upon a verdict. The judge took his seat and told Couterre, who had been brought back to the court room, to stand up.

"Gentlemen," said the judge, "have you

agreed upon a verdict?"

"We have," said the foreman of the jury.

"And what may that verdict be?"

"We find, your Honor, that Mrs. Louisa Couterre was shot and killed by her husband, William Couterre, and find him guilty of man-

slaughter in the first degree."

Couterre uttered not a word, but sank into his chair and sobbed like a child, while his children, their hearts breaking, cried out in agony. The judge then announced that he would pronounce sentence upon Couterre the following Monday. On that day Couterre was again brought into

the court room, and Judge Newman said to him:
"William Couterre, you have been fairly tried
by a jury of your peers, who have found upon
the evidence that you were guilty of wantonly
slaying your wife. The sentence of the court
is that you be imprisoned at hard labor for the
term of your natural life."

Couterre looked at him blankly for a moment, his emaciated frame shaking like a leaf, extended his hands toward Judge Newman, and cried out:

"My God! My God! Why did you not kill

me and put me out of my misery?"

And thus ended one of the shortest murder trials in the history of Monroe County.

TICK THE TWENTY-EIGHTH

CHRISTMAS EVE! Christmas Eve at the Boosch homestead! My, what a flood of recollections that brings back to me! How many of them I had seen in that household where I had ticked off one after another of those Christmas Eves. What gay, joyous throngs assembled there year after year, and at each succeeding year how it pained me to miss one or two of those radiant faces that had been gathered in by the grim reaper.

Christmas Evel You who are drifting to the sere of life, what a multitude of memories arise on that night. How well you recall, then, the very odor of the paint on the Noah's ark;—bringing back to your mind your childhood days. What a treasure that was to you, with the little sheep, the trees that looked so green as the snow was falling and the wind was howling without; the cows, one of which invariably had one leg broken; the shepherd, with arms glued to his side; the milkmaid, that you tried to marry to the shepherd, only she persisted in falling over at the most inopportune time.

And then, when the night had waned and you had fallen asleep, how they all passed in review in your dreams—the dolls, the ark, the dancing candlelights, the animals, the apples, the cakes and candies, and all the tinsel and glitter of the old-fashioned Christmas tree. You wondered. then, where Santa Claus got all those marvelous things that hung upon that tree.

And that first set of dishes! How you danced with delight, and invited all the dollies that the neighbors' children brought to that first tea party you held. And what talking and gossiping there was by the mothers of those dollies, while the fathers were in the other room putting on their military regalia and practising on the drums that were to lead the warriors on to victory.

And the dolls! What dressing and undressing; what trying on of hats that belonged to others, in order to see how much cuter they looked than in their own; how they paid neighborly visits to one another; how they stared at one another, as if jealous of the more queenly raiment that the better-dressed ones wore; how the mothers carried them out into the hallway, so that they could look up at me, ticking away in the full enjoyment of their joy, hoping that I would be running slow in order to prolong that evening of childish pleasure and delight, and said to their dollies: "Children,

it is time you were asleep. Come, now, be good children." And those dollies, with a cry of "Mama, ma-ma," would obediently close their eyes in slumber, whereat the mothers would be sorry that they had gone to sleep, for this was no night for sleep, and would straighten them up, and behold! all eyes were wide open again.

And the boys! Johnny, with his first pair of skates, how he wished the night were over that he might go out on the pond—the shimmering lights of the tree had lost their glamor for him; and Willie, with his drum, which emitted earpiercing sounds, to the older folks, but to him and the brave warriors who assembled at its roll it seemed as though it were muffled, hard though he beat it.

And then the older folks! Here was Uncle Henry, stamping the snow from his feet, unraveling the shawl about his head, and carefully wheeling around as they helped him off with his overcoat lest they should see the parcel that was so flagrantly sticking out of his pocket. And Aunt Em, walking behind him bundled up so that only her nose protruded, like a semaphore on a lonely railroad crossing, carrying a big parcel that she was sure no one could see, for she had it under her wrap, which bellied out like a sail in a storm.

And here was Uncle Ichabod, with a sleigh for little Charley, which he had surreptitiously hidden under the back of his greatcoat, so that he looked like a malformed camel; and, again, Aunt Mattie, with the inevitable bed cover, which it had taken her three years to make, although mathematicians could not figure out how she gave one away each Christmas when it took her three years to make one of them.

And when the horn sounded, calling you children down to the back parlor, where stood the Christmas tree, radiant with a myriad of candles, how you rushed down the stairs and arrived just in time to see a pair of legs that looked surprisingly like Grandpa's disappear out of the room—but they could not be his, of course, for was he not there, out in the hall, at the very end of the procession? What clapping of hands, what dancing, what shouts of delight, as each one received his or her present! "Just what I wanted—I wonder how good old Santa knew that?" they cried, although they had expressed their wish for weeks before to every man, woman, or child who would listen to them.

What chattering! Mamie was telling Katie that her doll was much larger than she had expected, while Katie said that she wished for a doll with black hair, and, sure enough, her wish

had been gratified, for there was the doll with hair as black as a raven; Jennie told Mabel that she had wished for a set of blue dishes, and asked her to call upon her and bear witness that she had received the most beautiful blue set that ever was; while Mabel assured her that the coat she had received was exactly what she had wished for, although she had never breathed a word to any one that that was her wish—a statement that could be refuted by her father and mother and a dozen others.

How the parents looked on and enjoyed the cutting-up and the pranks of the children; how they watched every movement, for they saw in that childish gaiety a replica of their own little selves in the years that were agone. And then came the veil that dimmed the eye as there arose the misty past—as they saw the spectred hosts of those who had been at those Christmases gone by. Each one could close his or her eyes and see before them, sainted and throned, some loved one looking down upon them from the heavenly realm.

And so it was at the Boosch homestead this glorious Christmas Eve. All these things—and more, too—were taking place, just as you, dear reader, have recalled them. It was typical Christmas weather, too. The snow had been falling

since early morning and was now quite deep; the wind whistled and howled as if it would keep in unison with the noise of the horns and drums, though it was not a bitter cold wind; and when the door was opened, how the trees glinted and glistened in the light shed from the room.

It had been the custom of the Boosches for years to have these Christmas Eve gatherings of all the relatives—and even of those who were not related and whom Dame Fortune had not smiled upon. And this year the party was increased by the addition of the five Couterre children, who were so delighted to be where there was so much pleasure after the many months of grief and loneliness, without father and mother, that they burst into tears of gratitude to the good doctor and his wife.

And, also, there were present the three children of "Lew" Felder, a worthless and shiftless citizen of Monroe County, whose time was mostly taken up in wearing out chair seats at the tavern and in talking about how the farmers might do better if they ceased from working so hard and hoarding their money, but spent it as he did—when he had it, which rarely happened. How the eyes of those poor children danced as they came into the house, with all the lamps a-going full blaze, What a revelation to them to see something

brighter than the dingy, dull little lamp that they had at home. And how those little hearts ached as they tried to hide their feet under the chairs so that the children who were so beautifully dressed, to their eyes, would not see them.

And when Myra handed them each a pair of brand-new, shining, substantial shoes, how they danced and laughed, and would persist in kissing her over and over again. And when they asked her if they could put them on next Sunday and she had answered, "My dear children, run out to the kitchen and put them on at once, so that you will look as nice as any of the others," how quickly they performed that task and returned with faces fairly shining with happiness and gratitude. How proud they were! And when Mrs. Boosch gave them each a pair of warm, fleece-lined gloves, their cup of happiness was filled, only to overflow when the good doctor, beaming benevolence and kindness, reached under the tree, pulled forth a package, and lo! there was a little muff for "Teenie," a locket and chain, with a wee little cross on it, for Ethel, and wonders upon wonders, what is this—sure enough, it is an overcoat—a nice, big, warm overcoat for Lewis. Doctor, Doctor, wasn't it worth it all and a thousand times over again—to see those faces and hear those shouts of delight?

It was about half-past eight when the folks began to arrive. First came Uncle "Si" Boosch, brother of the doctor, with his family—all girls, five of them there were: Laura, and Mattie, and Emma, and "Jo," and Anna—and a mighty pert lot of girls they were, too, let me tell you, full of life and fun and frolic. Then the sleighbells announced that another party was coming, and presently in came Cousin Hattie and her children, and then Cousin Edith and her husband and children, and then Cousin Austin and his wife, and then—but, my gracious, they kept coming so fast that I really couldn't enumerate them all.

Arthur Boosch, who had come home for the holidays, constituted himself a "Reception Committee of One" and stood by the door, shaking hands with the men and kissing all the women and girls—showing favoritism, I thought, as he kissed them in front of me, when a particularly pretty and vivacious forty-second-or-something cousin came in, shaking her light curls, wiping the snow from eyes that sparkled like jet, and pursing up her red lips when Arthur said: "Well, well, Cousin Frances, how glad I am to see you, I will have to kiss you, too, the same as all the rest."

And how she wiggled and squirmed to get out of the clutches of that man, who was strong

enough to toss her over the barn, it seemed to me. My! I wish you could have seen her face when he released his lips from hers—I have never seen anything like it, except the harvest moon. And how saucily she exclaimed:

"Arthur Boosch! How dare you? Don't you ever dare—if it wasn't Christmas Eve I would—" She seemed unable to say further, owing to her (feigned, I was sure) indignation.

"What would you do?" asked Arthur, laugh-

ingly, compelling her to answer.

"I would tell mother."

"Well, then I would have to kiss her, too," he said, and as that person came into the hall

just at that moment he kept his word.

Dr. Boosch was the "Inside Reception Committee," and greeted them all as they came into the back parlor, while Mrs. Boosch showed them upstairs, where Mary Lash had formed a sort of check room for the cloaks, and hoods, and bonnets, and what not? Then Arthur got the men together in the kitchen, and there they smoked and drank cider and talked, while the women folks sat in the parlor and talked of clothes and hats and meeting-house affairs and sang a few hymns.

Hello, hello, who is this coming now? Why, I thought everybody was here. Well, upon my

soul, I had really forgotten David Maujer—how could I ever have forgotten him?—but, then, there were so many about me, out here in the hall, that it is little wonder that I did not miss one person. How he mingled in with the jollity and almost became a child again. How he romped with the children and joined with them in their games and their play, sitting down on the floor and pushing the railroad train around and leading the procession of the armor-clad warriors going to battle.

The children were all in Mary's room, feverishly and anxiously awaiting the call for them to come down to see the tree and receive their presents. And when Uncle "Si" blew his nose in his red bandanna handkerchief, what a time Mary had to convince them that it was not Santa's signal! How long the time seemed to those children until, finally, the real signal came, and they went down the stairs helter-skelter, like sheep following the leader. And then—but it is beyond me to describe the joy, the happiness, the childish dancing and romping, such as never was before.

Myra did not get up from her chair very often—she was tired out with the preparation, she said, and did not feel well. I knew how full of sadness was her heart for one who was present last year, but was now absent. She was trying to keep

up as long as possible, for the children's sake, but I could see her, directly across the room from me, and knew that it was a hard matter for her to do so.

Then they sang, and talked, and had a cup of tea and some sandwiches and cake, until my hands were pretty close to twelve when Myra told her father that she could stay up no longer and would have to retire. Immediately thereafter the sleighs drew up to the door, and one by one, and two by two, and three by three, they shook hands all around, wished the doctor and all a merry Christmas, and departed, their laughter and shouts ringing in the midnight air. It was almost two o'clock before the last ones left. Dr. Boosch went immediately to Myra's room, while his wife and Mary Lash turned out the lights, and thus for that year ended Christmas Eve.

The full moon was out now, shining down upon the peaceful valley, keeping vigil until relieved by the sun. And the glorious sun, rising on the morning of that day commemorating the birth of our Saviour, peering down upon the snowclad fields, turned them into millions of scintillating diamonds, while pendent from the trees hung iridescent icicles like prisms hanging from the chandelier.

And Mister Sun, creeping higher, peered through

the curtains of Myra's room and saw her in bed, peacefully asleep. And then the same Mister Sun, becoming curious, rose higher and peeked closer into her room, as if to dispel all doubt in his mind as to what he saw there, until he burst forth into a blaze of glory and smiled benignly as his rays spread over something nestled close to Myra's breast—her new-born child, her daughter.

ru.

TICK THE TWENTY-NINTH

Five years later, on the eighteenth day of June, the fifth anniversary of the passing out of existence of James Carbon, there was seated in the office of the Cornelia Mining Company in Denver, deep in thought and gazing out upon the throng that was passing to and fro, the president, Mr. Amos Barcon. The office was substantially furnished and was in the Cornelia Building, which was devoted entirely to the offices of the company. Ascending the wide marble stairway, a few steps up, to the right, one was confronted by two doors. On the frosted glass of one was painted in plain black letters "Amos Barcon, President," on the other "Clinton Eilen, Vice-President."

Amos Barcon was thinking of the past. He went to the door, locked it, and gave himself up to reverie. His thoughts drifted back to his early childhood and youth on the farm; he pictured himself as a happy farmer's boy, with never a care and having a constitution that enabled him to perform the hard work his struggling parents were compelled to call upon him to do.

Then his memory carried him on to the death of his father and mother and the breaking up of the home and to his drifting about until he finally came to the Boosch homestead. Ah, what a happy day that had been for him, and

how many other happy days had followed.

Then his mind drifted to the various episodes that had taken place during his stay there—of how he had worshiped the very ground that Myra Boosch had trod. His heart beat rapidly as he thought of her kind, loving ways, of her graciousness to him, hired man only though he was, and of the love that had sprung up in his heart, unbidden by him, for one he knew was to be the wife of another. He thought of good Mary Lash and the many pleasant evenings they had spent together after the toil of the day was over; he thought of the strawrides, of the festivals, the prayer meetings, the sleighing parties, and of the boys and girls who attended them. He wondered if Tom had married Jane, if Robert had married Laura, and so on; he wondered if Bessie Newton, the little rogue who was responsible for all the pranks that had been played at the various outings, had become a sedate matron and had been married to Charley Walker, who was forever in trouble on account of her frivolity. What gay times those had been!

He thought of good Dr. Boosch and of Mrs. Boosch; he hoped they were well and happy, as they deserved to be, if ever mortals did; he thought of Arthur and his goodness to him when he first came to the Boosches, full of grief over the loss of his parents—of how he had been a companion to him, ever ready with a word of cheer. He wondered how Mrs. Brownson was getting along and if she had married again, and if so, was it "Hank" Decker who had won the prize. He smiled as he thought of Decker's aspirations and of his reference to his own good looks and his youthfulness, on that day when he had last seen him. He gazed pensively as they passed in review in his living memory.

He heaved a sigh as the vision of the tragic death of Richard Broakley rose up before him. What changes were caused by his death—how it had changed his own life and career. And Richard's parents, how had they survived the awful shock of his sudden taking away? He hoped that God had been merciful to them and had healed the wound and that they were ending their days in peace and prosperity. How well he remembered the last sight he had of Mr. Broakley, as he saw him tottering from the barn to the house to break the news to his wife. And from that on his memory went to the night that

he drove to town for Mr. Maujer and of the wedding. What a storm that was—he had been in many a storm since then, but none compared with that one. He remembered, as if it were but yesterday, how he had stood on the porch steps, hesitating whether he should knock at the door and ask for his stormcoat. All these things, and more, too, were passing through the mind of the man gazing out at the hurrying throngs.

Then he thought long of his marriage to Myra Boosch-Mrs. James Carbon. He had steeled himself-had hardly permitted himself to think of her-lest he might some day wish to go back and see the old place and the old faces again; he saw before him her sweet face, radiant with joy and happiness at the sight of Richard as he drove up the lane on the afternoon of that eventful day; his heart ached as he thought of her cry of agony when the doctor had announced to Mary Lash and himself that Richard Broakley was dead. How had she recovered? When had she secured her divorce from him, and would she ever marry again? Had she been blessed with a son or a daughter? These and a hundred other questions arose in his brain.

And his room and his Bible? Had the good doctor given his things to some poor and needy person? He hoped so. He felt sure that the

doctor would keep his Bible for him—some day, perhaps, in the far future, he would send for it.

Mr. Amos Barcon stepped over to a drawer in the oak desk and took from a box a cigar a luxury that Jim Carbon had never indulged in. He returned to his seat by the window, lighted the cigar, and puffed away with evident relish. As the wreaths of smoke ascended he saw Clint Eilen and himself meeting at the station in Jersey City and then traveling westward; he saw them working and slaving for three years afterward-grubbing, digging, tunneling, working in mine shafts day after day, week after week, month after month, with heart-breaking unsuccess; he saw them struggling along, penniless, after their funds had given out, hungry and in want sometimes, while around them were men becoming affluent, wealthy, rich as nabobs, in a night, almost, from some newly discovered vein; he saw them working away, on the advice of George Pell, on a blind lead near the Comstock lode, on the outskirts of Virginia City—blasting, shoveling, picking; he heard Amos Barcon, discouraged, pleading with Clinton Eilen to give up the quest for silver and to go elsewhere and secure work at something; he heard Clinton, with his "Flo" ever in his mind, cheerfully say, "Old man, I

came here to make enough to win over 'Flo's' guardian, and I'm going to do it or die here."

Mr. Amos Barcon, his thoughts flitting over the past, had smoked so rapidly that his cigar had burned almost to the end. He again arose, took out another, reseated himself, and once more the wreaths ascended and the flow of memories continued. He saw, again, picking up his vein of thought, Amos Barcon, one day in October of the third year of their mining, stooping over and with an exclamation picking up a handful of dirt, mixed with red clay-black decomposed dirt it seemed to him at first—but upon closer and microscopic examination it exhibited a thick sprinkling of "native" silver; he saw Clinton Eilen dance a war dance and heard him emit a whoop as they ground the handful of dirt up in a mortar, washed it out in a horn spoon, and when they saw the result they had thrown their arms about each other's necks and had wept from sheer joy, for they were sure that the Cornelia Mine, which they had located and which was named in memory of Barcon's mother, would be the means of making them rich men.

And Amos Barcon, smoking on, saw in the wreaths of smoke, Clinton Eilen and himself gradually selling stock at what would have seemed to them fabulous prices months ago, but retaining

sufficient to give them the controlling interest in the Cornelia Mine. What joy Eilen had exhibited at the prospect of claiming his "Flo!" And when the mine was sufficiently developed and in such good working condition that they could entrust it to a well-paid superintendent and they had decided to have the main office of the company in Denver, what rejoicing on the part of those two—for they had wearied of the scenes of their hard work and many days and months, even years, of disheartening failure.

And now—now that he had become a well-to-do man-what had he worked for, what had he endured hardship for? Who cared whether Amos Barcon was dead or alive? Whose heart would break if the Master should take him home? How often he had envied, almost, his dear friend and partner, as he saw him, sitting by the dull glare of the cabin lamp, writing to his darling "Flo." No one had he to write to-no one to whom he could pour out his discouragements, his ambitions, his hopes. Could he but have had the pleasure, the joy, of knowing that some true, faithful heart was waiting for his success, how much lighter would have been the labor, how much more pleasurable would have been the reward that he was reaping.

Mr. Amos Barcon, President of the Cornelia

Mining Company, awoke from his reminiscent mood and gazed upon the desk beside him. He saw there stacks of correspondence that needed attention, reports of the various foremen that were to be examined and filed away, routine work of all kinds that required checking up, requisitions to sign, payrolls that needed his signature, but, above all, pre-eminent, rose the beautiful face of Myra as he had seen it on the day that she had welcomed him at the old homestead and had wished him many days of happiness therein.

How it pleased him—the thought that with the first thousand dollars he possessed he had sent a draft to a certain firm in the city of New York, drawn in the name of George Pell in order that there might be no revealing his whereabouts even to strangers, with instructions to erect a monument in the little churchyard at the Corner in Monroe County, Pennsylvania, the monument to bear simply "Erected to the Memory of Richard Broakley." And in one corner, in small letters, was to be "For Her Sake." He wondered what it looked like and if Myra and Richard's parents would ever for one moment suspect that it had been placed there by Jim Carbon's orders.

Then he arose with a sigh, went over to his desk, looked over his mail, picked out one letter that bore in the corner the legend, "If not called

for within ten days return to William Wright, Attorney, William Street, New York." He knew full well from whom that letter came—Florence Vercool's guardian—for had he not answered Mr. Wright's letter requesting information as to how Clinton Eilen was progressing, for Clint had referred him to Amos Barcon? How strong he had made his answer, with all the thought of the welfare of his dear friend and partner! He had written that Clinton Eilen was one of the best and truest men in the world, that he had worked hard for years and that he was now in a position to support in comfort the woman for whom he had expressed such deep love and who had been his dream by day and by night.

He pushed all the other letters back—they could wait. It was of paramount importance that he should know what the answer to his plea for Clinton was. He tore open the envelope, and seating himself in his revolving chair by the desk, read:

"My Dear Mr. Barcon:—I have just received yours of the ninth and hasten to reply. It was with great gratification that I read your letter, and assure you that I have no hesitancy whatever in giving my consent. I have this day forwarded a letter to Mr. Clinton Eilen, which I trust will set at rest whatever qualms he might have as

to my ultimate decision. You may rest assured, that after reading your reply to my interrogations, I felt that it was the culmination of what I had desired and hoped for—to instil ambition and enterprise in one who, I felt sure, were it not for the fact that there was a certain goal to reach, would have fallen into a groove of inaction and lethargy. I thank you for your kindly interest in the matter and trust that we may some day have the pleasure of meeting in person. With kindest regards, believe me to be, dear sir, most sincerely yours,

William Wright."

After reading the letter Amos Barcon walked over to the window of his office, his hands in his trousers pockets. There was a cloud upon his brow. The news of the capitulation of the enemy—"Flo's" guardian—would bring joy to the heart of Eilen, but Barcon feared that it would mean a separation of those two who had been inseparable for so many years—Eilen and Barcon. How lonely he would feel without the cheery voice of Clint, who could dispel with a word any gloom that might be cast over them by discouragement and failure. He had become attached to him; he honored him, respected him, and though he rejoiced at his coming happiness, yet he felt a sense of desolation to think that he would go



"Pardon me, Madame, but did you drop your handkerchief?"

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away, the happiest man in the world, and leave him, for some time, at least.

It was at this moment that he stepped over to the window, and looking out, suddenly gave a start as if an apparition of the dead and gone had appeared before him. His eyes fairly blazed. Doubting his very senses and his eyes, he seized his hat, unlocked the door, and rushed out into the street. He hurried along until he caught up with a lady walking down the street. Dropping his handkerchief as a subterfuge, he picked it up, and extending it toward her, said:

"Pardon me, Madame, but did you drop your

handkerchief?"

She turned toward him a pair of eyes that revived memories of the past. And when she answered him, the voice dispelled all doubt in his mind.

"Thank you kindly," she said, "but I do not think it is mine."

As she said this she looked up at the blackbearded man, with eyeglasses, and courteously bowed to him.

Amos Barcon, trembling like an aspen leaf, walked hurriedly away from her, muttering under his breath:

"Great heavens! Mary Lash in Denver!"

TICK THE THIRTIETH

WHEN Amos Barcon returned to his office he dropped into his chair and gazed blankly at the wall.

"Mary Lash here! What in the world brings her to Denver?" he asked himself over and over again.

Were it not that he had heard her voice and looked into her eyes he would have thought that Mary Lash had a double. That she had not recognized him was a certainty—he felt a sense of relief at that, to know that his disguise was complete, for surely if she had not recognized him no one else would. He was so overcome with surprise that he scarcely knew what course to pursue in order to find out the reason for her presence in Denver. He was perplexed, overcome, by the discovery.

Suddenly the door opened and in bounded Clinton Eilen, holding aloft a letter. Eilen danced about the room as if he were a youth of fifteen, his face wreathed in smiles. He dropped the letter on the desk in front of Amos Barcon and

fairly yelled:

"Hooray! She's mine!"

"Yes," quietly said Amos, "I know that."

"You know it? How did you find out?"

"I, too, have a letter from Mr. Wright. He told me what his decision was."

"Say, old man," said Clint—it was the first time he had used his favorite expression in addressing his partner since they had attained the dignity of office—"can you spare me for a few weeks or so? I want to start to-morrow morning for the East."

"I think we can arrange that, Clint," said Amos, smiling at the impetuosity of his friend. "You can stay away for three weeks, and when you come back I, too, shall take a vacation and go away—probably to California."

He arose, put out both hands to Clint, and giving him a hearty, earnest shake, said to him:

"Clinton Eilen, my dear friend, it gives me much joy to congratulate you upon having won your 'Flo.' You cannot feel how much happiness and pleasure I wish you. Words cannot express how much and how often I have prayed for this day, when you would come to me and tell me that you had won your prize. May God bless you both and may your days of married life be long and fruitful."

"Thanks, Amos, I know what you say comes from the bottom of your heart. I only hope

that some day I'll have the pleasure of congratulating you."

"No fear of that, Clint," he answered, with

a sad smile. "That day will never come."

"You can't tell, old man. Some day you will meet a bright, loving young lady who will make you change your mind."

"Where are you going to meet your sweetheart?"

asked Barcon, changing the subject.

"She is stopping at the Delaware Water Gap, in Pennsylvania, and I am going there to marry her and spend a little while roaming around that part of the country."

"Delaware Water Gap!" exclaimed Barcon,

visibly affected.

"Why, yes," said Clint, who had noticed the agitated manner of his friend; "have you ever been there?"

"I have heard of it," Barcon answered coldly, evading the question and blaming himself for permitting his surprise to become noticeable.

"You see, Amos," continued Clinton, "I have an uncle living in Stroudsburg, Justice Henry Eilen, an old chap almost seventy. He took a great fancy to 'Flo' when I first introduced her to him, and they have been warm friends ever since. She likes to run over from the Gap and visit him, for he takes her out driving and gives

her a good time generally. I have been at the Gap several times, and a mighty pretty place it is, too, Amos. You ought to take a run up there

and see it, sometime, when you go East."

"Yes," answered Barcon, who had now shown no further visible surprise at the fact that his friend and partner was no stranger to those parts that he had left five years ago, "when I do I shall. And when that time comes, don't forget that you are to get a diamond ring from me. But I am afraid that you will never get it, Clint."

Little did Eilen suspect that the man he was speaking to had traveled about that region for years and knew practically every road, crossroad,

yes, even the lanes thereabouts.

"Clint," he resumed, "I shall miss you while you are away, I can assure you. We have been together now for five years and during that time we have been firm and fast friends—we have been like brothers. I am sorry to see you go, for I know I shall feel lonely while you are away, and were it not that you are going upon such a happy mission, I would almost feel constrained to ask you to abandon your trip. But, of course," he continued, smiling, "I couldn't do that under the circumstances. However, let me tell you how happy I shall be to welcome you and your bride when you return."

"Thanks," said Clint, as they shook hands again, "I'll see you to-morrow morning at the station?"

"You certainly will. I shall be there to wish

you good-bye and Godspeed."

"Well, au revoir until to-morrow. I want to do a little shopping and packing — and there is something, above all, that you can be sure I won't forget, and that is a plain band of gold for her dear finger. Good-bye."

He fairly danced out of the door, his face beaming with joy and happiness. As soon as the door had closed Barcon wheeled around to his desk, hastily wrote a letter, sealed it with wax, and ringing a call-bell, gave it to the boy who

responded.

"Take this at once to the Pinkerton agency on Market Street and give it Mr. Charles Marks. If he is not in, wait for him—do not give it to any

one else. Remember, no one else."

"Yes, sir," answered the boy, as his hand closed on the coin that was put into his palm. Barcon then went to his luncheon, and when he returned he cleaned up his desk of the mass of correspondence and routine and detail work that was lying about.

The following morning Barcon and Eilen met at the station, said many "Good-byes,"

and as the starting signal was given Carbon handed Clint a small parcel containing a diamond sunburst, which he asked him to give to Mrs. Clinton Eilen as a wedding present from his dearest friend and well-wisher, Amos Barcon. He sadly watched the train as far as he could see it, and with a sigh returned to the office of the Cornelia Mining Company.

Three days later Barcon was seated at his desk in his office when a boy brought in a card bearing simply the name Charles Marks. He told the boy to show him in at once and not to permit any one to disturb them.

Mr. Marks, a thin-faced, sharp-eyed, cleanshaven man of about forty, bustled into the office, bowed, put his hat on the desk, dropped into a chair alongside of Barcon's, and blurted out:

"Well, sir, here I am."

"Good," said Amos; "I trust that you got the information that I desired. You, of course, understood from my letter that the matter was strictly confidential between us?"

"I did," answered Mr. Marks, who spoke in a

quick, jerky manner.

"Very well, let me hear what you have learned. You smoke, do you not?" passing over a box of cigars.

"Yes, sir, I do—everything. When I am in

the company of gentlemen I smoke cigars; when I want information from thieves I smoke cigarettes, and when I have a detail among miners I smoke a pipe."

He reached over, took a cigar, lit it, puffed a few times, watched the smoke roll up, as if refreshing his memory, pulled out a small memoran-

dum book, and began:

"The person about whom you desired information—Miss Mary Lash—has been in Denver a year, eleven months, and two days—"

"Nearly two years!" interrupted Barcon, unable

to conceal his surprise.

"You will find that to be correct—absolutely," said Mr. Marks, referring to his memorandum book. "She came here from Pennsylvania—from the vicinity of a place called East Stroudsburg, I should judge, for she receives letters bearing that postmark."

Barcon merely nodded for him to go on.

"To begin at the beginning," continued Mr. Marks, "it appears that Miss Lash had an aunt here who was alone in the world, was in poor health, and received a pension for the loss of her husband in the army. The aunt, Mrs. Ann Hart, had written to her niece, asking her to come on to Denver to comfort her declining years. She did so and lived with her until the—let me

see" (here he again consulted his memorandum book). "Oh, yes, here it is—the twenty-third

day of last January, when she died."

Mr. Marks paused for a moment while he ran over some entries in his book. Barcon had taken a cigar and was smoking and listening with intense interest.

"And then?" he said, to urge the detective on.

"And then," resumed Mr. Marks, picking up the thread of his investigation, "Miss Lash found herself almost penniless, for what little money she had was used up in providing comfortably for her aunt and in giving her proper burial. I understand that she has seen some very hard days since then, Mr. Barcon."

"That is exactly what I want to find out," said Amos. "But how did you get this informa-

tion so quickly?"

"From the landlady with whom Miss Lash and her aunt had boarded—or rather from the landlady's husband, who is a shiftless sort of cuss and will talk as long as you buy liquid refreshment for him—and I can tell you that I bought as long as he would talk. Hardly the right thing, I suppose, but it's in the line of my business."

"You say she has seen some pretty hard days. Tell me, was she ever really in want?" asked

Barcon eagerly.

"Not that anybody positively knew, but from the inference of Bucher, her landlady's husband, I surmise that there were times when she wanted for food."

"I thought you said she boarded with them?"

"Yes, she did for a while after her aunt's death.

But I guess her funds were getting low, for she hired a little store with a room in the back and started a millinery shop with what little capital she had left. It didn't pay well, for she had little money and most of her stock was—er, pardon me—cheap and shoddy. It seems that she has a proud spirit and would rather starve than ask any one for assistance, although she could have gotten that quick enough from Herman Ridder."

Barcon had been leaning back in his chair, puffing away, his mind set on a certain purpose. When the detective mentioned that name he fairly leaped out of his chair and anxiously asked:

"Herman Ridder? What Herman Ridder?"

Mr. Marks eyed him curiously, smiled complacently, leisurely raised his cigar to his lips, removed it, blew a cloud of smoke in the air, as if he would keep Mr. Amos Barcon in suspense for a moment, and then said, with a gleam of satisfaction at the interest he had aroused:

"Why, Herman Ridder, Superintendent of

the Cornelia Mine-your mine, Mr. Barcon."

"And what in the name of heaven," heatedly asked Amos, as he dropped back into his chair, "has he to do with Miss Lash?"

"Why, your superintendent is very much in love with Miss Lash. And as far as I could learn from Bucher, she thinks a great deal of him. I found out that he is in town—"

"I know he is," interrupted Barcon. "He

was here an hour ago."

"And in order to prove some things to myself I took one of our stenographers, representing that she was my wife, and bought her a hat in Miss Lash's store. Ridder was there, and it didn't require an experienced detective to see that those two are very much in love."

"And why doesn't he marry her, if she needs

some one to help her, if she is in-want?"

"Because, Mr. Bucher tells me, Herman Ridder is one of the most bashful men in the world and would rather lose his life in a powder explosion than propose to the woman he wants to be his wife."

"So that is the sum and substance of it, I take it—Miss Lash is in love with Ridder, who hasn't the courage to ask her to marry him, while she is actually in financial need?"

"Yes, sir, that is the truth of the matter. Do

you wish any further information, Mr. Barcon?"
"No, that will be all. I am very much obliged to you, sir, for your promptness. If you will send your bill to me I will see that it is paid at once."

He shook hands with Mr. Marks, and when he had gone he sat for some time in deep thought. Suddenly he took up his pen, wrote for a few minutes, called a boy and told him to take the letter he handed to him to Miss Mary Lash, milliner, on Lawrence Street.

There was a self-satisfied smile on the face of Mr. Amos Barcon as the boy started off with the note.

TICK THE THIRTY-FIRST

MARY LASH, seated in her little "millinery parlor," was anxiously awaiting customers. store was deserted. There was a look of anxiety upon her careworn face, for her rent was overdue and business was anything but promising. In the rear of the store was her dining-room, bedroom, and kitchen, all in one. She arose at intervals and walked back and forth from the store to the back room, thinking of Herman Ridder, who had gone only an hour before. She was wondering why he did not make her happy by asking her to be his wife and relieving her of this struggle for existence. She was wondering thus when the store door opened and a bright, neatly clad boy entered and handed her an envelope.

This was such an unusual occurrence that Mary was surprised. She hastily tore open the envelope, glanced at the printed letterhead, and knowing that Herman was employed by the Cornelia Mining Company, she was startled, for the thought entered her mind that some accident might have befallen him. She exhibited

astonishment when she read the letter, which was very brief, and merely asked that she come to the office of the company the following morning at eleven o'clock on a matter that concerned her. It was signed "Very respectfully yours, Amos Barcon."

"What on earth can they want of me?" she asked herself. What "matter that concerned her" could have to do with the Cornelia Mining Company? Surely she had never heard of Amos Barcon before—what could he, a stranger, want to see her about? Perhaps the building in which was her store was owned by the company and they wished to know why the rent had not been paid to the agent. However, there was the request, and she would satisfy her curiosity and close the store for an hour to-morrow—it would not matter much, if business were no better than it was now.

That evening Herman called again to see her. She did not mention about the letter, as she did not wish him to know of her financial embarrassment—that her rent was unpaid. They had supper together and when they parted she went to her little room and there spent a restless night. Early in the morning she arose and arranged her toilet with extreme care. She endeavored to assume a bright and cheerful air, but the lines of care were upon her brow. She locked the door

of the store at half-past ten and walked rapidly down Lawrence Street to Forty-second Street and then turned into Arapahoe Street, where stood the Cornelia Building.

Ascending the short flight of steps, she walked up to a door bearing the legend, "Amos Barcon, President." In response to her timid knock the door was opened by a heavy-bearded man, with eyeglasses.

"You are Miss Lash, I believe?" said Barcon in a deep bass voice as he extended his big, brawny

hand.

"Yes, sir, that is my name. I received a letter from you yesterday asking me to be here at eleven o'clock to-day."

She put out a gloved hand—Barcon was quick to detect how worn the glove was—and smiled as she continued:

"I was surprised to receive a letter from you.

Is it in regard to the rent for my store?"

"Why, no," answered Barcon. "It is a matter of entirely different import, Miss Lash. I asked you to come here for a purpose—what that purpose is will reveal itself later. Would you mind sitting behind that screen there? Here is a magazine to while away the time until I call you."

Mary Lash walked over behind the screen and sat down. She was very much puzzled.

She was wondering what it could all mean when the door opened and in walked a broad-shouldered

man, towering over six feet.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Pell," said Barcon, grasping the hand of his friend, "I am glad you came, and I think when you are through you will say the same. All I want you to do is to sit there as if you were my lawyer and say nothing unless I should ask you a question. That is easy enough, isn't it?"

"Why," laughingly said Mr. Pell, "that's the easiest thing in the world for me, being a

man, to keep my mouth shut-"

Just then he glanced up and saw Miss Lash as she settled gracefully in the arm-chair Barcon had placed behind the screen for her. She sat in full view of Mr. Pell, but could not be seen from Barcon's desk. Mr. Pell was on the verge of breaking his promise when he saw Mary there. He, too, was beginning to wonder what it was all about. Barcon was rubbing his hands in apparent glee and was expectantly watching the door. There was silence for a moment, which was broken by a sharp knock at the door. Barcon arose, opened it, and exclaimed, in assumed surprise:

"Oh, that you, Herman? Come in. I see you keep your appointments promptly. Mr.

Pell, my superintendent—Mr. Ridder, Mr. Pell. I have asked him to meet me to-day to talk over some business matters."

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Pell," came from a set of lips that betokened kindness and firmness. And he gave Mr. Pell a grip that, though he had done some mighty hard work in his time, convinced him that his muscles were becoming soft. George Pell, reseating himself, looking over at the arm-chair, saw a lady half rise at the mention of Ridder's name, while he saw also the cheeks of the same lady change from the color of a peach to—well, there is no description save that of the plain word—red.

"Sit down, Mr. Ridder," began Barcon in that slow, methodical way that Herman had become accustomed to when Barcon and Eilen were weighing some heavy problems, "I have sent for you on a matter that concerns us both deeply. To make the matter clear to you I must first state that I am worn out by business cares and have been notified by my physician that I must take a rest or break down completely. As you well know, my business interests require close attention, particularly as Mr. Eilen is not likely to devote as much time to them in the future as he has in the past."

He paused for a moment, evidently to map out

some plan he had in mind. Herman remained

silent, waiting for him to resume.

"Well, the upshot of the matter is," continued Barcon, "that I am going to appoint a manager to look after my interests here in Denver and place a new superintendent at the mine in Virginia City. Now, I don't want you to think for a moment that I have not appreciated your services in the past, but you will readily understand me when I say that I cannot trust my many and complicated interests to the care of any one who is—er, irresponsible, in a way. Mind, I do not mean to imply that I do not place the strictest confidence in you, but I mean in the sense that a young man without family ties is hardly the person to whom to entrust my affairs. So I tell you candidly that I have come to the conclusion to put married men in the places of manager and superintendent. I am sorry, Herman, but you will see for yourself that it is for the best."

Barcon wheeled around in his chair as if to look in his desk, but to Mr. Pell it was evident that the motive of the move was to give Ridder time to grasp Barcon's meaning. Mr. Pell glanced over toward the figure behind the screen, from whom there came a muffled, choking sob. He then looked at Ridder, whose strong-featured face was white, but impassive. Not a movement

of the muscles was there to show that he felt any regret—not a sign of the bitterness that was working underneath that big chest.

Barcon wheeled around again and faced Herman. He looked at him for a moment and then said:

"Well?"

"Of course, Mr. Barcon," came from Herman, in a calm, measured manner, "you are the judge of what is best for your business interests. I have always endeavored to serve you well-to safeguard your interests as if they were my own. I have had dreams that some day I might be more to you than a superintendent. I knew that you were breaking down from business cares, and I have tried to prepare myself for the duties that I thought would devolve upon me should you retire for a time from the active management of your properties, for I knew that Mr. Eilen would not care to be burdened with them. But probably you are right. A married man may be more reliable, but I am sure not more faithful, than I have been."

There was silence for a moment—a silence that seemed unbearable to Mr. Pell. He glanced again toward the figure behind the screen. Mary Lash had drawn a dainty handkerchief from her handbag and was suspiciously wiping her eyes.

Why she should feel interested in the matter

was beyond him.

"Mr. Barcon," said Ridder, breaking the pall of solemnity that seemed to pervade the room, "when shall I retire in favor of my successor?" He said this quietly and resignedly.

"At once. But, of course, you will remain

in my employ."

"Not at all, sir," said Herman. "I have no ties to bind me here. I shall go away at once—

for good and for all."

Here there was an audible sob from behind the screen. Mr. Pell, looking up, saw the hand-kerchief doing double duty. He glanced over at Barcon, who he knew was possessed of an iron will, when need be. He knew, also, that if he had resolved upon the course he was pursuing it would be futile for him to appeal on Ridder's behalf. But he did not know why that visible smile was playing about those lips of Barcon, which opened to deliver this:

"Herman Ridder," said Barcon, as he arose from his chair and stood in front of that person, his voice rising as he became enthusiastic—nay, almost dramatic—"Herman Ridder, are you a fool? Do you mean to tell me that you are going to let the opportunity of your life slip by? Do you mean to tell me that there isn't a lady in this

town who loves you enough to marry you? Do you mean to tell me that you aren't in love with one of the sweetest and best girls that you ever set your eyes on? Do you mean to tell me that you haven't got courage enough to ask that lady to marry you in order that you may hold your position with me?"

Barcon paused for breath. It was a study to watch Ridder's face. It turned all the various gradations from white to purple. He was dumbfounded. A light seemed to dawn upon Mr. Pell, who saw the figure by the screen rise up suddenly, her face scarlet, and leaning forward as if in doubt whether to emerge from her seclusion and reveal herself.

Barcon had regained his breath. He resumed: "Do you mean to tell me, Herman Ridder, that because you are too bashful to ask that lady to become your wife I am going to let you go? Do you mean to tell me that you are not going to get married and take that cottage I own on Larimer Street and which I will give you as a wedding present? No, sir, Mr. Herman Ridder, you are not going to play me that way, and I know the lady is not going to allow you to lose your opportunity simply because you are a single man. Miss Lash, will you kindly step this way?"

To describe the look of surprise that came over

Ridder's face as the trim little figure emerged from behind the screen is beyond words; much more difficult would it be to picture Herman's absolute astonishment and crestfallen manner as Miss Lash stepped over to Mr. Amos Barcon, President of the Cornelia Mining Company.

"Now, look here," continued Barcon, a broad smile overspreading his countenance, "this little lady needs the protection and love of a great big fellow like you. Do you think it is right to let her battle against a cold, heartless world alone, while you—big, strong, healthy man that you are—

go about caring only for yourself?"

It seemed as if Barcon had reached the extent of his vocabulary. Miss Lash, blushing, looked appealingly first at him and then at Mr. Pell. Herman Ridder was entirely at a loss how to act. Mr. Pell, unable to contain himself any longer, sprang up from his seat, went over to Mary Lash, kissed her as fair as ever fond father kissed daughter, and yelled out, in almost childish glee:

"Bully for you, Amos Barcon! If he doesn't marry this dear little lady, let him go. And if he does, why, I will furnish the house for them. What more do you want, eh, Mr. Ridder—Miss

Lash?"

This outburst seemed to delight him so that he fairly danced with joy. Barcon, becoming

inoculated with the spirit of enthusiasm took Mary by the hand and led her over to Herman, and made them join hands.

"What do you say," said Barcon, turning to Herman, "are you going to be Miss Lash's

protector for life?"

"I certainly will be, if Miss Lash consents," emphatically declared Herman.

"I consent," she said, blushing.

"Now, then, you two-listen. To-morrow morning you are to be wed. Miss Lash is to close up her store, Herman-Mr. Herman Ridder, Manager of the Cornelia Mining Company, if you please. We will meet here to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock—you, Miss Lash; you, Mr. Ridder, and, of course, a minister. you will be here, too, won't you, Mr. Pell?"

At which George Pell performed a terpsichorean feat that would have done credit to a premiere

danseuse and cried out:

"I will be the first one here."

What handshaking there was! How Ridder hung back in order to give vent to his feelings,

his gratitude to Amos Barcon!

And Mary Lash! Didn't she go up to the bronzed, bearded man and smack him squarely on the lips and declare him to be the "best, dearest, loveliest man that ever lived?"

TICK THE THIRTY-SECOND

THE following morning, Herman Ridder and Mary Lash, all smiles, appeared at Mr. Barcon's office. Barcon and Pell were there-George Pell had arrived at half-past nine, the office boy informed his employer. But wasn't he dressed up to kill? Underneath his iron-gray chin whisker was a flaming red tie that would have flagged an express train. In the aforesaid tie there was a diamond that would have answered for the headlight of the said express train. mustache had been carefully curled and his hair was pomaded until it glistened like a lookingglass. What a hearty handshake he gave Herman! And didn't he kiss Mary three times and tell her that she was as pretty as a picture and looked too sweet for anything? One would have thought that he had known Mary for years.

Promptly at eleven o'clock the Reverend Joseph Morris and his wife arrived in a carriage. There were introductions all around, and the minister then performed the ceremony, Mr. Pell acting as best man and Mrs. Morris doing duty in place of a bridesmaid. Mr. Barcon gave the bride away.

When the minister ended with those words that Barcon had heard five years ago, "That which God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," what kissing there was, and handshaking, and congratulations. How happy those two were. And George Pell! Why, one would have thought that he was the bridegroom. He laughed and sang, slapped Herman on the back, and congratulated the couple over and over again.

After the ceremony they all went to Mr. Pell's hotel for dinner. Mr. Barcon had informed Herman that he would give him two weeks' vacation and the happy couple had decided to spend their honeymoon at Colorado Springs. Mr. Pell said that he would keep his word and have the cottage that Barcon had given them for their wedding present furnished for them when they returned. No wonder they were so happy when they said good-bye to their benefactors. No wonder that the lines of care that had been on Mary's brow had suddenly been dispelled.

As Mary—Mrs. Herman Ridder—said goodbye to Mr. Amos Barcon she slipped a dainty little envelope into his hand. Of course Barcon knew what it contained—it would be full of words of gratitude to him. He put it in his coat pocket and walked slowly back to his office. What a flood of memories rushed through his mind

during that walk. Being in the company of Mary for a few hours had removed the gap of years since he had taken the train at East Stroudsburg. When he arrived at the office he found a stack of letters and bills and other business to be attended to. For three hours he worked assiduously and then closed his desk. It occurred to him now that he had not read Mary's letter. He took it from his pocket, opened it, and read:

"Mr. Amos Barcon-

Dear Sir: I do not know how to express my gratitude to you for your kindness to Mr. Ridder and myself. I shall not attempt to do so. But I want to say that you are the noblest, kindest, best man that ever lived. And, furthermore, let me tell you one thing, Mr. Barcon—and that is, that if you only knew it, you could win the love of one of the best and truest hearts that ever beat—the love of one of the sweetest and prettiest women in the country. And some day you will find that out, too, you dear, kind, good—Jim Carbon!

Mrs. Herman Ridder I will be when you read this, but I still sign myself

Mary Lash."

Amos Barcon uttered an exclamation when he read his real name—the name which he had not seen since that memorable day when he had

taken the one he now bore. Mary, then, had discovered his identity, notwithstanding his selfassurance that his disguise had not been penetrated. He felt, however, that she would not betray him—of that he was sure. But what did she mean when she wrote that he could "win the love of one of the prettiest and sweetest women in the country"? He tried to conjure up all the pretty women he had met since he had become a man of some standing in the community —for the president of the Cornelia Mining Company would have been considered a very desirable "catch" by many a fond mamma. But he was not vain enough to believe that any woman would fall in love with him, for he was anything but a handsome man—he knew that.

She evidently meant no woman in particular; she meant in a general sense that he could win the love of "one of the best and truest hearts that ever beat." However, when she returned from her honeymoon he would have a heart-to-heart talk with her and beg her not to reveal that he was Jim Carbon, who had so suddenly disappeared from Monroe County—not even to her husband. He wondered if she received letters from Myra; he wondered if he would dare ask her if she had heard when Myra had been divorced from him; he wondered if she would tell him all the news

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about the dear old place, if she had been in communication with Myra; or would she, not knowing why he had gone away so suddenly and believing him to have forsaken Myra, avoid his questions and declare that she knew nothing whatever? Mr. Marks, the detective, had told him that she received letters postmarked East Stroudsburg, and he felt sure that she was fully informed of the doings of those he had left behind.

Amos Barcon was a busy man the ten days following Eilen's departure for the East, for upon him devolved double duty—that of his own office and that of vice-president. He was thoroughly worn out and looked forward to the return of his partner and Ridder in order that he might lay aside business cares and take a much-needed and well-earned rest. He had worked indefatigably these five years, and the strain was beginning to tell upon him. He had received a letter from Clinton, and with that letter was one from Mrs. Florence Eilen, in which she expressed her thanks for the beautiful present and said that she looked forward to the day when she would meet Mr. Barcon in person. Clinton, her dear husband, she said, had made her promise that she would give him a sisterly kiss, for she would be as a sister to him, for had he not been a brother to her Clinton?

Clinton's letter was full of happiness and worship for his "Flo." He told when and where they had been married and said they were stopping with his uncle, Judge Eilen, who could not do too much to make their honeymoon trip one ever to be remembered. He wrote of the long drives they took and described the beauties of the Delaware Water Gap and the surrounding country. Reading further down the page, Barcon read that the minister who had married them had called often to visit them, for he was a friend of Uncle Eilen, and spoke of the oddity of his name—one like which he had never heard before. over the page to read on, he uttered an exclamation of surprise, for the minister who had joined Clinton Eilen and Florence Vercool in the bonds of matrimony was none other than David Maujer.

Barcon gave himself up to meditation when he had finished reading the letters. What a combination of circumstances had happened lately to kindle anew the feelings that he had for those dear folk he had left behind these five years agone—feelings that he had studiously quelled until they had become as dead ashes upon the smoldering fire. First, his discovery that Clinton Eilen was going to the place where he had passed so many happy days; then the sudden awakening to the realization that Mary Lash, whom he had

thought thousands of miles away from Denver, was actually here; then to see his own name again—Jim Carbon, how sweet that sounded to his ears—how much more euphony there was in it compared with Amos Barcon; then to hear again of that dear friend, that good man of God—David Maujer, who had made Myra Boosch Mrs. James Carbon, only to "let man put asunder."

Herman Ridder had written often to him and to Mr. Pell, and each letter was full of gratitude and prayers for the welfare of both of his benefactors. He looked forward anxiously to the time when he would take up his new duties, for it had been the dream and ambition of his life. and it would be such a pleasure to him to relieve Mr. Barcon and have him go away and recuperate without any concern as to his properties. Mary had written frequently to Mr. Pell and each time that he received a letter he would rush over to Barcon's office and chide him for not being able to "capture the ladies and have them write to you like they do to me," for Mary had not written a line to Amos since she had handed him the letter on the eve of their departure.

Four days later Herman Ridder and his wife returned from their honeymoon. They bustled into Barcon's office, full of happiness and enthusiasm. Mary went directly up to him and

kissed him as if he were her father, while Herman looked on with evident delight at the exhibition of gratefulness his wife had shown to the man who had made their lives so full of joy. As soon as they entered Barcon summoned his office boy and told him to go to Mr. Pell's hotel and inform him that he wanted to see him at once, for Ridder had returned.

In a very short while Mr. Pell, bearing a large picture of himself, arrived. What a fuss he made over the couple. Sit down for a while? Well, I guess not. Go they must, at once, and see how prettily their cottage had been furnished. so they did. Mary's eyes fairly danced as they went from room to room and admired the tasty manner in which everything had been furnished. How in the world could Mr. Pell ever have managed and planned every room just as she had pictured in her mind she would have it? And Mary herself, standing on a chair, with Herman holding her up in great trepidation and fear, personally hung the picture of George Pell, which in later years gazed down upon the little Ridders as they arrived and grew to maturity. Often did they beg Mr. Barcon to have his picture taken, so that he, too, might adorn the wall and occupy the place of honor alongside of that of his esteemed friend—but no, he never would do

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so, no matter how strongly they urged him. Time and time again Barcon tried to have a moment's private conversation with Mary, but she had diplomatically managed it so that, whenever he called, her husband or some one else was present. She was aware that he would ask her some questions that she, for obvious reasons, just at present did not care to answer. She was anxiously, expectantly, feverishly awaiting some development of a little scheme of hers which she hoped each day would blossom and bear fruit. She had something on her mind, that was certain, for had not Herman noticed lately that she had betrayed some agitation whenever they spoke of Amos Barcon?

Clinton had written that he would return on the coming Saturday, and Barcon was looking forward to that day. He had so arranged his affairs that he could go away the following Monday. It was on Friday afternoon that Mr. Amos Barcon, seated in his office, with a stack of mail in front of him, was dreaming, as he had often done, of late, of the past, and was nonchalantly running his eye over the envelopes in front of him, when his eyes fairly bulged in astonishment at a letter, addressed in a feminine hand that seemed to him familiar and that bore the postmark of East Stroudsburg. His hands fairly



"Merciful God! Can this be true, or am I dreaming?"

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trembled as he broke open the seal; and for a moment he appeared as one stunned as he drew his hand across his forehead, while the letter fluttered to the floor.

It was some time before Amos Barcon recovered himself. When he did, he raised his eyes to heaven and exclaimed:

"Merciful God! Can this be true or am I dreaming?"

TICK THE THIRTY-THIRD

Amos Barcon picked up the letter from the floor and let his eyes rest on the signature. True enough, he was not deceived. There it was, as plain as he had ever seen anything in his life. He walked over to the door, locked it, and then reseated himself, laying the letter on the table as if in fear that his trembling hands might tear the precious missive apart. He read slowly, as if in dread that he might miss one word, almost spelling each one out to himself. And this is what Mr. Amos Barcon, President of the Cornelia Mining Company, read:

"My dear Husband:

I have just received a letter from Mary Lash, who tells me that she is about to change her name to Ridder, and in which she tells me of the kind and generous act on your part toward her husband and herself—only one more added to the many noble and self-sacrificing deeds that will ever be cherished by so many who have cause to bless you. My father long ago told me of the sacrifices you have made, my dear husband, and I am proud to tell you that I have long ago learned

to love one who could be so good, so noble, so generous, so self-sacrificing—what woman would not learn to love so good a man?

My dear husband, do you think you could learn to love me a little? Do you think that I could win just a little bit of your love? I will be a good wife to you, true as I have been to your name, which I still bear and always will until death separates us. Were it not that father is getting old I would come to you and plead in person, but I cannot leave him now, and mother, too, needs my care. Will you come to me and let me try to win your love? Remember, my dear husband, as your mother's Bible, which you left behind and which you quoted, says: 'There is laid up for you a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give you on that day.'

I shall anxiously await a word from you, giving me some hope that you will come to me and that we may end our days in happiness and in the warmth of a true love that should belong to so good a man as you. Give my love to Mary, and tell her that I thank her for her letter, else I should probably never have heard of you again. She has done a Christian act in notifying me at once of your whereabouts, for I have prayed to God day and night that He would lead me to you,

and at last my prayer has been answered.

May the Almighty watch over you and guard you day and night is the prayerful wish of your loving wife,

Myra."

When Amos Barcon had finished reading the letter he dropped upon his knees and for fully five minutes he prayed silently and earnestly. He thanked the Master for His goodness to him, for His watchfulness over him, for His leading him into the paths of righteousness, for His blessing him with prosperity, and for His offering opportunity to right his respected name in the little community he had left five years ago.

When he arose there were tears in the eyes of the big, scrawny man—tears that were honest and came from the very depths of the soul of that good man. Aye, tears that no man would be ashamed

to acknowledge had been shed.

He paced up and down his office with the letter in his trembling hands, as if he were afraid lest he might awaken only to find it had all been a dream. Over and over again he read: "My dear husband, do you think you could learn to love me a little?" Learn to love her a little? Learn to love her a little, the woman whose picture was ever before him, try as he would to forget it, for her sake? Learn to love her a little, the

woman who had won his love so many years ago and which love the years had not dimmed, even though he had known it to be a hopeless one? Learn to love her a little, she who had owned the only love he had ever known for living woman? Learn to love her a little—his love, which had been hers so wholly and fully at the time when she dreamed that there could be no other love than that of Richard Broakley's?

He read the letter over again, raised it fervently to his lips, replaced it in the envelope, carefully put it in his pocket, and sat down to dream and think, and think and dream. He sat there for an hour, heedless of the mass of work in front of him, oblivious of the existence of the Cornelia Mining Company. Then there came a knock at the door, and brushing his hand across his brow, and making sure that the letter was safe in his pocket, he opened the door. The office

"Why, Mrs. Ridder," said Barcon, in a voice that was now unassumed and that was clearly Jim Carbon's, "how do you do? Step into the

boy stood there, and behind him was Mary Ridder.

office. Where is Herman?"

"He is in Mr. Eilen's room. I told him I wanted a few minutes' private conversation with you and that he needn't be jealous, for he would dance with joy when he found out what it was all

about. Do you know, Mr. Barcon"—she laid great emphasis on that name each time she gave utterance to it—"that I have had dear Herman worried because every time he started to talk about you I would change the subject? Why, he thought I had taken a great dislike to you. What do you think of that?"

Barcon laughed. "Why, I certainly would not

have you dislike me, Mrs. Ridder."

"Oh, please don't call me Mrs. Ridder. I am married now, and you are married, too, and we are old friends and can call each other by something less formal than Mrs. Ridder and Mr. Barcon. I have always called you Jim Carbon before and it sounds so good and so like the old times at the Boosches when everybody knew you as Jim Carbon that I just can't help it."

"Well, then, so be it, Mary," replied Amos, as he extended his hand, "for the little time we will see each other we will dispense with formality and be old friends again—only no more drying dishes for you and escorting you home from

festivals, eh?"

"Little time we will see each other? What do you mean, Jim Carbon? You certainly are a man of mystery."

"I mean that I am going away from here and—"
"Going away from here!" Mary gasped, as

she had five years ago when he had made the same announcement.

"Yes, Mary," said Barcon, with a slight twinkle in his eyes; "yes, I am going back to my wife to prove to her that I am not so good a man as you have tried to convince her that I was."

Mary dropped into a chair in open-mouthed wonderment. But only for a moment, for pres-

ently she bounded out of it and cried out:

"I knew it! I knew it! Didn't I tell you that you could win the love of one of the best and prettiest women in this country—and that woman your wife—although I didn't tell you that at the time? Don't I know that she has been pining for you, and that if you will only go back and be a good boy you can win back her love? Didn't I write to her and tell her how good you are—"

"Yes, Mary, I know that. I have a letter

from Myra."

"Oh, you have, have you? And you won't

let me see it, I suppose?"

"No, Mary. It was intended for no eyes other than mine. Myra wanted to be remembered to you—and I have you to thank and bless for that letter, haven't I?"

"Well, yes, in a way, I suppose—but, then, you know, one good turn deserves another."

Mary stood in front of him, put out her hands,

and looked up into those eyes that she had so loved in years gone by, and with a simple, straightforward frankness said to him:

"Jim Carbon, you are going back to your wife and daughter to take care of them, aren't you,

you dear, good, kind, old Jim Carbon, you."

Barcon gave a start. Daughter! Myra, then, had been blessed with a daughter. He looked as frankly into those eyes looking so appealingly at him and said softly, pressing the hands he held:

"Yes, Mary, I am."

"God be praised!" said Mary. "I knew you were not the bad man some people thought you were, and I don't believe Myra thought so, either. I am sure she never spoke ill of you for deserting her—she always told me that perhaps some day you would return to her a better man and make amends for the past."

Amos Barcon thought it well to change the

course the conversation was taking.

"On Monday, Mary," he said, "Amos Barcon will pass out of existence, for I leave then for East Stroudsburg. Amos Barcon will never return to Denver, but perhaps Jim Carbon may some day, for a visit. But I will insist that you and Herman shall come and see us every summer, for I shall never forget how much I owe to you, Mary. You are at liberty to tell Herman all, and

to-morrow night I shall call at your house and you can then tell me everything that has happened

since I left the dear old place."

"Oh, what a delightful time we shall have," said Mary, gleefully. "Just think, telling Jim Carbon all that happened while I was there after he had gone and all that I heard from letters I received from Myra. It seems like a dream. Why, it will take me all night, almost."

"So much the better," answered Amos, "for

that will help pass the time."

"Good-bye until to-morrow, then," said Mary as she bounded out of the room and joined her husband.

Amos hurriedly went through the mass of work in front of him and put his affairs into such shape that he could give Clinton power of attorney to act for him in his absence.

The following day was a busy one for him. First he went to see Mr. Pell and told him that he was going East. That dear old soul fairly wept at the thought of parting. He had been as a father to Amos and loved him as a son. He was no longer a young man, was Mr. Pell, and could not bear parting with one so dear to him without a pang, for with the advancement of years one does not look forward to meeting again in this world with the same hopefulness that is inspired

by youth. But he promised that he would take "a run East" and see Barcon soon, for he was going to give up his various business affairs and retire.

In the afternoon Clinton Eilen and his "Flo" arrived. My! what a happy couple they were. And what a time "Flo" made over her new "brother." Amos did not wonder, now, why Clinton should have been so anxious to win such a prize. While she was not a remarkably pretty woman, she certainly had a disposition that would have captivated any man's heart. They had a late dinner together, and after that Amos asked "Flo" if she could spare her husband for a while, as he had many things to tell him. He took them over to Ridder's cottage and "Flo" and Mary immediately formed a friendship that lasted for a lifetime.

Barcon and Eilen went to the office of the Cornelia Mining Company together, and there Amos told his friend all—how he had married Myra Boosch and deserted her; how he had gone away suddenly and had never heard from her until the day he had seen Mary Lash; he told of having advanced Herman to the position of manager and of his marriage to Mary Lash. Then he confessed that his real name was James Carbon and that he was going back to make

reparation to his wife, who had remained true to him, scoundrel though he had been. He did not spare himself. When he had completed his story and had informed Eilen that he would sell out his interest to him and would go back to East Stroudsburg, Clinton's heart fairly broke at the thought that they should have to part company after these years of brotherly companionship.

Long and earnestly those two men conferred, and when they arose—as it was time to go back to Ridder's, for Clinton had promised his "Flo" that he would take her to some friends, and Amos remembered Mary's promise to tell him what had transpired at the Boosch homestead and thereabout—they had formed a compact that meant the passing out of the firm of Barcon & Eilen, for Clinton had resolved that he, too, would sell out his interest, but would remain long enough to settle up everything and make provision with the new owners of the mine that Ridder was to be retained for life. They were fairly well-to-do, those two—free from all danger of ever knowing want again, and Clinton had resolved to return East and live somewhere near his dear friend. so that all could be happy together.

When they arrived at Herman's house Amos put his hand in his vest pocket and took therefrom a diamond ring which he passed to Clinton, saying

"My dear Clinton—my dear friend—I now pay the bet I made five years ago, for I am going where I thought I would never go again in my lifetime—East."

"It was a long time ago that we made the bet," Eilen said as he slipped the ring on his finger, "and I hope our friendship will long outlast the

ring."

Happy indeed was "Flo" when Clinton informed her that they were going to Pennsylvania to spend the remainder of their days there, and Mary was sad to think of their going. She and her husband would keep their promise and take the long journey to visit them, and hoped they would all come out to Denver together and stay with them

for a long time.

That evening and far into the night Amos Barcon, seated in Herman Ridder's parlor, listened to Mary's recital of the events that had transpired since that night when he had gone out into the storm and darkness with the avowed intention of never returning or of being heard of again. Herman sat with them and took great interest in the story as it unwound itself from Mary's lips. It thrilled Barcon to listen to the old, familiar names and to the touches of pathos Mary lent to the narrative as she described the funeral of Richard Broakley and the subsequent death

of Mrs. Broakley and then of Mr. Broakley's sudden passing away, to be buried on the same day as his wife. She had a good memory, had Mary, and when she wound up by saying, "And that is all, Jim Carbon," she had given him a vivid description of the events that had taken place in the interim between his departure and the present day. Only one thing did she forget, and that was that "Bill" Couterre was serving a life sentence for the murder of his wife.

It was two o'clock in the morning when Amos emerged from Ridder's house, after saying many hearty and affectionate farewells to that happy pair.

TICK THE THIRTY-FOURTH

It was one of those hot, sultry, listless days in July that I was ticking away the hours alone here in the hallway of the Boosch homestead. Dr. Boosch and his wife and Myra and her daughter—also named Myra—were seated on the porch. The good doctor was asleep in his armchair, with the big Newfoundland dog Rover by his side. Mrs. Boosch was reading a paper, her head drooping now and then, as if she, too, were drowsy. Myra had her work basket in her lap, and was sewing a frock for her little daughter, now four and a half years old, who was prattling by her side and building houses with some wooden blocks that bore the letters of the alphabet and pictures of various animals.

A spirit of content pervaded the very atmosphere. The sky was cloudless and there was scarcely a ripple in the air, save now and then when a slight breeze would lift up the dust from the road and gently twirl it around like a miniature inverted cloudburst, only to die out again and leave the sun beating relentlessly down upon the landscape. In the distance the mountains were veiled with

the peculiar haze that characterizes a hot summer day.

Myra, whose beauty the years of sorrow could not mar, had blossomed into full womanhood. As she sat on the porch in her rocker, with the trailing trumpet vine as a background, sewing and humming a tune, she made a picture one could not readily forget. She had grown a trifle stouter, and the supple lines of girlhood had given way to the well-developed proportions of motherhood. Her eyes sparkled as brightly as ever, though tinged with sadness at times, and her cheeks, fanned by the listless breeze, were as rosy as in former years.

She was gazing in an abstracted manner down the lane, now, her work basket lying idly in her lap, dreaming of the past, when suddenly she gave a start, and with a cry to her father and mother, called their attention to a familiar figure swinging steadily up the main road. Nearer and nearer he came, his eyes fixedly set upon the homestead, until with steady tread the big, scrawny figure swung into the lane.

Dr. Boosch and his wife had started up at Myra's cry and were intently watching the figure coming up the road. Myra stood as one transfixed until the figure came into full view of the house. When the face of the man became visible

Myra sprang from her chair and cried out to her parents:

"Father! Mother! It's Jim Carbon-my hus-

band!"

Myra bounded from the porch and darted down the lane. Dr. Boosch and his wife, uttering an exclamation of surprise, followed her, with little Myra and Rover in close pursuit, in full enjoyment of the ecstatic pleasure that was shown by the gray-haired couple. An instant later Jim Carbon and Myra, his wife, were locked in each other's arms, Myra weeping from joy, and Carbon, his eyes lifted to heaven, offering up a prayer of thankfulness for this moment of bliss that he had never even dreamed was to be.

It is beyond me to describe that meeting of those so long separated. What earnest, heartfelt, sincere joy there was in the welcome from the good doctor and his good wife. Never was prodigal son so welcomed upon his return. How the doctor's kindly eyes beamed as he stroked the big, rough hand of Jim Carbon, while Mrs. Boosch, her face aglow with the happy content of one who has heard a prayer answered, was unable to contain herself and had to give vent to her supreme joy by kissing them all, giving Jim twice as many as the others got.

My, my, my! Is it any wonder that I ran

way ahead of time when I heard that familiar step upon the porch stoop that I had not heard for years? Little wonder, I say, that I did not stop altogether for a time when I heard the voice of Iim Carbon again after these many years. And to see him, with his arms around Myra's waist and her eyes looking soulfully in admiration of the big, scrawny fellow who had willingly offered himself as a sacrifice was enough to recompense me for all the sadness that I had seen in those beautiful eyes of Myra's. He was the same Jim Carbon as of yore—his clean-shaven face—not handsome, by any manner of means, I am not ashamed to say—lighted up with love and kindliness, shone to-day, when he stood in front of me, with a lovelight that was pure and good. And his wife, his Myra, returned that lovelight with one that had been ripened and mellowed by the years of knowledge that the man she had wed was one of the truest and noblest of men, even though he had been only "the hired man."

After their transport of joy had abated somewhat the good doctor insisted upon Carbon going up to his room, which, he told him, would be found exactly as when he had left it. He went up with him, unlocked the door, pulled up the shades, opened the windows for the first time in

five years, and there was the room precisely as it was on that memorable night when Jim Carbon and Myra had been married and when he had last seen it. After a long talk together, Dr. Boosch sitting on the edge of the bed and Jim sitting on the chair by his side, the doctor related how Myra had gradually recovered from her grief at the death of Richard Broakley and how he had tried to instil in her mind the noble sacrifice Carbon had made, and then gradually urging on the respect and love that were beginning to grow in her heart for him. Carbon listened in silence to the good doctor's words of praise, and when he had finished he narrated all that he and Eilen had gone through in the five years that had passed.

They returned to the porch, and there, seated by Myra's side, Carbon related to her the experiences he and Eilen had had, dwelling lightly upon the hardships they had undergone, but speaking at great length of the goodness of Clinton and his ambition to win his Florence. They sat there, chatting and laughing, until supper time. Dr. Boosch had dispatched one of the farmboys on horseback to bear the tidings of Carbon's return to Mr. Maujer, and when he arrived—he lost little time, I can tell you—he awoke again the rejoicing that had taken place in the afternoon. My, but wasn't he glad to see Jim Carbon—the



Jim and Myra, arm in arm, like lovers, walked in the cool of the evening

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man he considered one of the very best of men! I thought they would never stop shaking hands. And when he said grace at the table didn't he sing a pæan of praise for the good man who had returned to them and for whom he asked, again

and again, God's blessing?

After supper Jim and Myra, arm in arm like lovers, walked in the cool of the evening over the paths they had so often gone before, but not thus linked together, and during that walk he told her of the love that had been hers from the very day that her father had introduced him as the "new man to help about the farm." He spoke deeply, passionately, did Jim Carbon, telling her that his love was as unselfish as it was unbidden. told her how his heart had throbbed when he had received her letter, and prayed that they would live many years to enjoy the fruits of his toil and bask in the sunshine of each other's love. Like lovers those two walked along, and when they returned little Myra ran up to greet them. Carbon picked her up in his strong arms and tossed her in the air and romped and played with her, and a deep affection for the counterpart of his wife sprang up in that big heart of Carbon'sbut who could help loving that bright, pretty, vivacious little child?

After little Myra had been put to bed by her

grandmother, who would not relinquish that precious task to any one else, they all sat in the parlor together, discussing various matters connected with themselves and with the neighbors. when Mr. Maujer asked Carbon if he had heard about "Bill" Couterre, to which Jim replied that he had not—what had happened to him? Mr. Maujer then related the whole affair to him. Carbon listened intently, and when the minister had arrived at that stage describing how Couterre had come from the barn in his stormcoat and oilskin hat, that night of the 18th of June five years ago, in that terrific storm, and that a moment thereafter his wife had been shot and the barn set on fire. Carbon started as if seized with a sudden inspiration. He questioned the minister closely, and as Mr. Maujer explained the evidence on which Couterre had been convicted, Jim cried out:

"My God, that man is as innocent of that crime as I am! I was the man who came out of the barn that night, having borrowed Couterre's storm outfit. And when I turned down the road I saw the barn ablaze. Why, it couldn't have been Couterre," continued Carbon, heatedly, "for I met him in East Stroudsburg; he could not have walked there, in the condition he was in, in less time than I could, for I went at a pretty good pace. There is some dreadful mistake."

"Let us hope so," said Mr. Maujer, a hope in which Myra and the good doctor and his wife joined. There was silence for a while, Carbon remaining in deep thought. Suddenly he sprang from his chair.

"I have it! I have it!" he emphatically declared. "Couterre always kept his gun ready loaded and cocked, and that stroke of lightning set the gun off, and it was hanging pointed toward Mrs. Couterre's window. That's what happened. Great heavens! And Couterre has languished in jail all this time without my knowing it. Doctor—Mr. Maujer—to-morrow I must set to work to right one of the greatest wrongs that was ever perpetrated."

Carbon at once mapped out a plan for securing Couterre's release at the earliest possible moment, and said that on the morrow he would go to the judge and each member of the jury and secure their signatures to a petition asking for his immediate pardon. He would hire the best of counsel, that justice might be done at once.

The following morning Myra, radiant with delight, and Carbon by her side, beaming with joy and happiness, started on their drive to visit the various members of the jury that had convicted Couterre. What a lovely morning it was, and how Carbon's eyes drank in the scenery to

which he had been a stranger for so long. by the little churchyard where lay Mr. and Mrs. Broakley and Richard, Carbon heaved a sigh, which was echoed by Myra. She knew now who had placed that monument there, towering above the little tombstones, inscribed "For her sake." She said nothing, but the look in her eyes as she turned toward her husband spoke volumes of

gratitude for his veneration for the dead.

On the way to town they stopped at the Broakley Farm, now occupied by Mr. Charles Farson, husband of the former widow Brownson. maybe she wasn't surprised and glad to see Jim Maybe she didn't go up and kiss him right in front of his wife and in front of her husband, too. And maybe Mr. Farson didn't congratulate Myra upon the return of her husband, who had been such a kind friend to his wife when she was so sorely in need of spiritual and financial help, for she had ever sounded his virtues to her husband when all others were condemning him. And maybe Myra wasn't proud of the big, husky fellow who handed her in and out of the carriage as if she were the most precious of all things. And maybe she wasn't prouder still at the hearty greetings that were accorded them as they drove along and passed by the neighbors at work on their farms or driving to town.

My! but how the news spread that Jim Carbon had returned—and a rich man, too! When Carbon explained and made clear to the jurymen that Couterre was an innocent man and secured their signatures asking for his pardon, they drove to the judge's house and presented the signed petition, and that man of justice, after listening to Carbon's lucid explanation of the whole affair, promised him that Couterre would not remain in prison one moment longer than he could help.

In the evening Myra wrote to Mary Ridder, telling her how full her cup of happiness was and how she longed to see her again, while Jim indited a long letter to his dear friend Clinton, in which he told him to give his "regards to Amos Barcon if he saw him," and urging him to settle up his affairs and come home to "God's country" as soon as he could. He did not forget to write to Mr. Pell, either, you may rest assured—it was the longest letter that that good soul ever received, I am sure, and at the end were a few lines from Myra, in which she stated that though she had never seen him, her dear husband had so impressed her with his goodness that she would welcome the day when she could personally thank him for his many kindnesses to her Jim.

Carbon's devotion to Myra was the talk of Monroe County, for he was ever by her side, and

many there were who wondered how so good a man could ever have been so wicked as to have deserted so true a woman as Myra. It was rare that one went without the other, and the love that had grown in Myra's heart for Jim Carbon in his absence had so ripened that she idolized the big, awkward, scrawny man. And when Arthur Boosch suddenly came home from one of his trips he was the most astonished and happiest man in the country to shake hands with him again. It made Jim smile when Arthur told him that he had met "Hank" Decker in Philadelphia, where he was working in a canning factory, and that he had delivered such a tirade against femininity in general, and widows in particular, as could only emanate from a man whose highest hopes had been blasted.

Such a roundelay of pleasure trips followed Carbon's return, each one vying with the other to do honor to him and to his pretty wife. What a lot of company they had—all the young couples and lovers in the county seeming to enjoy the romance of the Carbons. And more and more attached to each other became Jim and little Myra, so much so that when she was taken ill and her life despaired of for a time, he never left her side, day or night, but kept vigil with Myra until the crisis had passed.

A month later Couterre came home a free man—white-haired and broken down in health. Who can realize the sufferings that he had undergone? Who can understand the joy that was in the hearts of his children when he returned? Jim Carbon, feeling that he was in a measure responsible for the great wrong that had been done Couterre, made reparation by settling upon him a comfortable annuity that freed him from financial worries for the remainder of his life.

The following summer Clinton Eilen and his wife and Mr. Pell came—the former to make their home permanently in East Stroudsburg and the latter only for a visit. Surprised, indeed, was Myra when she found that Clinton's wife had been Florence Vercool, for Jim had never mentioned her maiden name. They had met before, years ago, when Florence had stopped at the Marshall's Falls Hotel. Those two became as sisters, and scarcely a day passed that they did not see each other.

Herman Ridder had left the employ of the Cornelia Mining Company and had gone out to California, where he had established himself as a prosperous fruit merchant. He had promised that the following year he and Mary would come East for a long visit and bring with them little Herman. Mr. Pell remained for a month, and

when he left it was with the determination to return as soon as he had settled his affairs, as he had no ties to bind him to Denver and wished to end his declining years near his dearest friends.

It was in the fall of that year that there was a great commotion in the Boosch homestead, for unto James Carbon and Myra a child had been born—unto them a son was given. And it was not so very long after that that the good doctor had decided to give up the old homestead and live with his daughter, for they had improved the house in East Stroudsburg that Mrs. Broakley had willed to Myra and had urged the good doctor and his wife to live with them—to end their days in peace and comfort.

And so, with the passing from the old Boosch homestead, I, too, the old family clock, was moved to East Stroudsburg, where I was placed in the spacious spare room in the attic, to tick away

my remaining days of usefulness.

RUNNING DOWN

AND now, ticking away up here in the attic, I see before me, as the memories of the past arise, sweet Myra and honest Jim Carbon seated upon the verandah of their new home, surrounded by the good doctor and his wife, and Arthur, and Clinton and Florence Eilen, and Mr. Pell, and Herman Ridder and Mary, who had come to visit them, watching the play of the children—little Myra and her baby brother, James Richard, and little Herman Ridder. There are peace and happiness depicted upon all as they rock to and fro, the men smoking contentedly and the women chatting and laughing at the sallies of wit from Clinton.

I see before me now, as I did in the years agone, passing in review in my refreshed memory—

The good doctor and Mrs. Boosch, living contentedly and happily with their children and grandchildren, spending their days in that tranquility and peace that is apportioned to those whose lives have been useful and whose mellowing years are blessed with the fruits of pure and righteous living.

Arthur Boosch, married to the pretty, lively, little forty-second-or-something cousin, Frances Transer, who had become indignant when he had kissed her so flagrantly before the merry party assembled at the Boosch homestead that Christmas Eve. Settled down is he now, one of the prominent, substantial business men in Philadelphia, but spending much of his time with his dear sister and Jim Carbon. They have two sons, and Arthur rejoices thereat, for in them lies the hope of perpetuating the name of Boosch.

Clinton and Florence Eilen, whose love for each other is as deep as ever, the streaks of gray in their hair betokening the advancing years. Childless are they, but the love for Myra's children fills to some extent the void they feel. Ever faithful to Myra has been Florence, and of Clinton's friendship for Jim Carbon it may be said

George Pell, that man so beloved by all for his generosity and charity to the unfortunate, basking in the sunshine of the deep friendship of all who knew him, particularly Jim Carbon and Clinton Eilen, living a life of comfort and ease, spending his days wandering about the country and his nights with his dear friends.

that it rings true as steel.

David Maujer, minister, man of God, devoting his life to Christian work and spreading the Word,

ever grateful to Dr. Boosch for his uplifting, succoring the poor and needy, encouraging the afflicted, rejoicing with those whose lives had been blessed with health and prosperity and praying for those whom misfortune and death had overtaken. It was a lifework of yours, David Maujer, and when the Father of us all calls you home He may well say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

William Couterre, stanchest of Jim Carbon's many friends, whose lips have never tasted a drop of liquor since that memorable 18th day of June, living a peaceful life, free from toil, and regaining by degrees the vitality that had been sapped by five years of solitary confinement. Ever green is the grave of his wife, and his daily visits to it make him feel that she is still with him and is full of forgiveness for the hours of sorrow he caused her by his periods of dissipation. Alice is married now, but still lives with him and helps to brighten his life, while Tom and the other children never forget that though he had been harsh to them when under the influence of liquor, he had been the kindest of fathers when sober. Never a week passes that Jim Carbon and Myra, with Mr. Maujer, do not drive out to see him and the children and cheer and encourage them.

Mrs. Farson, ever grateful to Jim Carbon for his goodness to her when she was the widow

Brownson, living a happy life with her second husband, the second broad of children getting along famously with the first. Stout has she grown, and when she steps into the carriage it sags very much to one side until Mr. Farson also steps in, when it is equally balanced, for he, too, has gained in weight under the good care and good cooking

of his dear partner.

And as they pass in review there looms up in my dimming vision Mary Ridder-Mary Lash that was — most devoted wife and mother. hear again your infectious laugh, I see again your ruddy, sunshiny face. Time has passed, my Mary, but time has not withered the flower that has blossomed with the ripening years—and as the petals of the departing seasons drop off one by one they have left the flower more beautiful in the surroundings of the buds it has brought into the world—your two sons and two daughtersradiating loving kindness and devotion. A worthy husband has been the man, now silvery white, who knew no love but yours-who knew no joy that could not be shared by you, whose closing eyes will see no one but you-your dear husband and protector through life, Herman.

Often and often, in the twilight hour, on your visit here to your dear friends, have I heard you two recount the days when the mine superin-

tendent loved the little milliner, and then—well, there comes from your lips an earnest, sincere, heartfelt thankfulness to the man to whom you owe so much of your well-deserved happiness—Iim Carbon.

And as the years flit by, I see again before me the good doctor, grieving over the passing into the great beyond of his good wife, but putting his trust, as ever, in the Almighty, living in the hope of that meeting in the heavenly kingdom. I see again before me, in after years, the good doctor sitting on the verandah, in the twilight hour, a peaceful smile upon his lips. I see him there, in his big armchair, gazing out upon the lawn at his grandchildren with the contentment that follows a life well lived, and with the sinking of the sun in the western hills I see him, with his eyes closed, that smile still upon his lips, but now of death, for as his life had been lived so in the tranquility of the evening the Reaper had taken him away, and so there had passed away peacefully, without pain, without struggle, a man of whom it was said that he personified the highest ideal of manhood—a man who was honest with himself, honest with his friends, and, above all, honest with his God.

I see again before me, you, my dear Myra, leaning against my wornout old frame, alone

here in the attic, your eyes suffused with tears, sobbing as if your heart were breaking, giving vent to the grief that was yours upon the taking from you of your dear, kind, loving father—than whom none better ever lived—whose every care was for his daughter, whose every thought was of her, whose whole life seemed wrapped up in her. he loved you, my Myra, from the day when he said to me, "A daughter, eh, Mister Clock?" Such a warm, deep, paternal love was that such a love as shines refulgent above all other earthly loves, whether of brother, lover, or husband. I see your dear husband, Jim Carbon, coming up the stairs to find you here, alone with me, and with the warmth of his love dispelling the tears and lightening the grief that was yours, as he put his arms about your neck and folded you to his breast.

And now that I am running down and beginning to feel that my days of usefulness are over, I conjure up before me sweet Myra, who comes up to see me often, for she still loves the old family clock that has ticked so faithfully through the storms and sunshine of her life. I see her before me now, her face still beautiful, though crowned with hair that is becoming silvery; her eyes, still sparkling as of old; her form as erect as ever, full of love for her husband and children. There is a

smile of peace and contentment upon her lips, for after the tempestuous days her ship of life is riding upon smooth waters, guided by the faithful love and trust of her dear husband. Her daughter, now grown to womanhood, is ever by her side, and when she comes up to look upon my face I see before me the Myra of olden times, for she is the exact counterpart of her mother. Her son, James Richard, a young collegian, is the pride of his father and mother, and often in the evening, when home for vacation or for the holidays, he sits by his father's side and listens to the story of the struggles Clinton Eilen and Jim Carbon had to win their fortunes in the far Western country. A big, strong fellow is he, and his affection for his parents and sister is deep and pure.

I see before me again you, Jim Carbon, man whom I loved, whose voice was as music to me, whose ever-smiling face dispelled the gloom and darkness in those days of tribulation, whose very step I had learned to know. Oh, that the world were peopled with more such men as you, Jim Carbon—so good, so kind, so true, so manly! I see your big figure, now a little bent with age, loom up before me, as you pass your hand through your whitened hair, and gaze upon me, your thoughts running through the past, uttering a prayer of thankfulness for the love that is yours—

that of your good wife, Myra. Deep and lasting has been your affection for her, I know, and worthy of all the happiness and content that has been yours have you been, Jim Carbon. May the Father, when He takes you home, grant you the highest seat upon the throne of grace, and may you have by your side the one you so loved.

And now, ticking softer and softer, up here in the attic, there arise the notes of that favorite song of Myra's, and I hear your voices, though tremulous, blending in sweet harmony, singing:

"When your eyes so bright have lost their light, Your voice so dear no longer here; When you're called home and I'm alone, I won't know what to do. If the Master knew how I'd miss you, I wonder if He'd take me too? 'Twould break my heart if we should part, For I've grown so used to you."

Ah, me! My tale is told—I have told it in my plain, old-fashioned way—and now I feel that I have run down, for with each succeeding tick it has become more and more laborious until, with a pulsating, tremulous, vibratory effort to keep on, I cannot do so any longer, and so I, the old-fashioned family clock, pointing to the midnight hour, have stopped—forever.



